

PAGE  
335  
503  
311  
383  
551  
  
383  
551  
69  
359  
383  
431  
551  
357  
575  
60  
239  
407  
132  
599  
503  
479  
455  
383  
  
237  
19  
512  
309  
405  
  
166,  
358,  
550,  
  
167,  
359,  
527,  
  
167,  
359,  
551,  
  
105,  
216,  
312,  
432,  
561,  
  
168,  
360,  
552,

THE  
LONDON READER  
of Literature, Science, Art, and General Information.

[ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.]

No. 1330.—VOL. LII.]

FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 27, 1888.

[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[ROSALIND RESCUED BY A STRANGER!]

ROSALIND'S VOW.

CHAPTER XIII.

"GOOD-BYE!"

BUT before she had gone far Edith again changed her mind. She felt that, until Marchant's words were disproved, it would be impossible for her to enter the door of a house whose roof sheltered the woman called by the officer Nona Vansittart.

She paused to consider, and at that moment a little boy—one of the children in her Sunday-school class—came whistling along on the other side of the hedge, and supplied her with a messenger.

She called him, and told him to run to the Cedars with a note, which he was to give into no other hands than those of Mr. Stuart.

Then she tore a leaf from her pocket-book, and scribbled on it, in French, a request that Claud would come to her at once, in the plantation—at their old tryst.

The boy took the note, and looked doubtful,

scratching his head by way of expressing his embarrassment.

"What is the matter?" asked Edith, impatiently, seeing something was amiss. "Won't you take my note for me?"

"Why, you see, Miss, the Cedars be a funny place, it be. All sorts of queer things are done there, and people do say as how no good comes of going near it."

"Nonsense!" cried the girl. "Besides, it is broad daylight, so you have surely nothing to fear. Look here," she held up a shilling, "this is for you if you do as I tell you."

The sight of the silver overcame the youthful rustic's scruples, and he promised to execute the commission with as little delay as possible. In token of which he set off as fast as his legs could carry him.

Edith, meanwhile, went to the trysting place, and she had not to wait very long before Claud arrived, panting and breathless with the haste he had made.

"My darling!" he said, advancing with arms outstretched; then, as he saw her face, his own changed, and his arms fell nervelessly at his side. "Edith, what is it?"

The girl controlled herself by a great effort, but her lips were very white, and trembled piteously.

"I want to ask you a question," she said, clasping her two hands together across her heart, "and I implore you to answer it truthfully."

"Have I ever given you reason to suppose that I am capable of telling you a lie?" he returned, but with more melancholy than anger in his voice.

She paid no attention to the question.

"When you told me you loved me, and begged me to keep our engagement secret, I promised I would do so," she went on, gathering firmness as she proceeded. "You inferred then that there was some mystery which rendered this secrecy on my part necessary. You did not tell me what that mystery was."

"Because I could not," he answered, eagerly. "If it had concerned myself alone I should have done so, but this was not the case. It involved another person more than myself."

"And that person was a woman?"

He started violently and grew still paler, but he answered quietly,—

"Yes; that person is a woman."

"And she lives with you at the Cedars, and is called your mother?"

"Good Heavens! Edith, how did you know this?"

"Never mind how I knew it. It is true, is it not?"

He bowed his head, and did not reply. Indeed, he seemed rendered speechless by surprise and agitation.

Edith's heart, in which some shred of hope had still lingered, sank lower and lower.

"I am answered," she said, turning away. She hesitated, and took from her dress a ring he had given her only yesterday, and which, afraid to wear openly, she had attached to a gold chain and suspended round her neck.

"Take it," she said, "and let me try and forget that you and I have ever met."

He pushed it aside with so much unconscious violence that it fell from her hand and rolled amongst the leaves at her feet. Neither attempted to pick it up.

"Edith!" Claud exclaimed, "surely you cannot mean to leave me thus? Surely your love will stand the test of doubt better than this?"

"The test of doubt it might stand, but not that of certainty."

"But you have no such certainty. At the most your suspicions are only suspicions."

"Still, they are confirmed by your refusal to set them at rest. Can you assure me that the lady living at the Cedars, under the name of Mrs. Stuart, is really and truly your mother?"

"Alas, no!"

"Or that one drop of your blood flows in her veins?"

Again he shook his head, and groaning deeply, leant against a tree as if for support.

"Then what am I to believe?" cried Edith, passionately. "How is it possible that I can trust you any longer?"

"If you loved me as truly as I love you, you would trust me—fully, entirely!"

For a moment Edith hesitated. Heaven knew how she *did* love him—how her very soul went out to him even now. But how could she ignore the evidence of her own senses? If he were indeed innocent why did he not say so, and put an end to this miserable doubt?

"When a woman gives her plighted word to a man, as I gave mine to you, she has a right to expect, if not full confidence, at least a measure of openness," she said, with a certain womanly dignity that contrasted strangely with her girlish appearance. "This, at your request, I consented to dispense with; but it seems to me the time has now come when, if our relations with each other are to continue, I have no alternative but to demand it."

"I acknowledge the justice of your reasoning," he returned, sadly, and yet with some surprise at the tone she was assuming; so widely different to his former experience of the coquettish, inconsequent little beauty, who had charmed away his heart before he was aware of it.

"And yet you will not satisfy my request!" she exclaimed.

"I have already told you that in honour I cannot."

"It is enough!" Edith said, hastily. "I understand your motive—but you should have thought of it before you asked me to be your wife."

"I did think of it!" he exclaimed. "You would pity me if you knew how hardly I strove to conquer my love. Alas! my resolution was too weak, and it conquered me!"

She made a quick despairing gesture with her hands, and at that moment became aware that someone was advancing from the direction of Crowthorne.

It was Captain Marchant, who had discovered her absence from the Manor, and had thereupon come out with the intention of meeting her.

He stopped as he saw her companion; but Claud did not notice him, for his head was sunk on his breast, and he seemed to have yielded himself to the very abandonment of despair.

Edith cast one look at him, then went forward and met the officer, who, seeing how deadly pale she was, offered his arm, which she took, and together they walked back in silence to the Manor.

For some time Claud did not move. So utterly dumbfounded was he by the suddenness of the blow which had fallen upon him that he did not even ask himself from whom Edith had learnt Nona Vansittart's presence at the Cedars.

Presently he stood upright, and the little ring, glittering amongst the leaves, struck his eye. He picked it up, and walking with rapid footsteps to the brook which intersected the plantation a little higher up, threw it in the water with a gesture full of passionate despair. The circles it made as it fell widened and widened indefinitely, and for a few seconds Claud watched them, smiling bitterly the while.

"It is like one sinful action—the consequences are unending," he muttered, as he turned away.

The next morning Squire Charlton and Polke Marchant chanced to be caught in the rain, as they were walking past the Cedars, on their way to some preserves half a mile farther on. The weather had been dull, but it had not looked likely for rain, and the unexpected storm found the two sportsmen quite unprepared.

"We shall be wet to the skin if we don't take shelter somewhere," grumbled the Squire, to whom the prospect certainly did not commend itself. "We had better go inside the Cedars, and ask Stuart to let us stay till the storm is past—it is only a shower."

"Couldn't we take shelter under the trees?" queried his companion. "As you say, it won't be for long."

But the Squire, who was not without a considerable amount of curiosity regarding the domestic arrangements of the Cedars, insisted on knocking at the door, and Marchant had no option but to follow him.

Their summons was replied to by the same sour-faced domestic who had admitted Edith and her father, on the occasion of their first visit; but instead of unbarring the door, she thrust her head out of an upper window, and sharply demanded to know their business.

"We want to see Mr. Stuart, my good woman," replied the Squire, considerably taken aback at this singular greeting. "We were going to ask him for shelter until the rain leaves off."

"As to shelter, the porch 'll keep the rain off, and as to Mr. Stuart, he's gone away, so there's not much chance of your seeing him."

"Gone away!" repeated the Squire and Marchant in a breath. "When did he go?"

"I don't see that that's any business of yours," replied the woman, with an uncomplimentary sniff. "But, if ye want to know, he went away by the first train this morning."

"And his mother—Mrs. Stuart?" It was the Captain who spoke.

"She went away with him."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the Squire. "This is very extraordinary. My good woman, when do you think they are likely to return?"

"I'm sure I don't know," responded the "good woman," whose civility did not improve on acquaintance. "And if I did know I shouldn't tell you."

With that she shut the window, as an intimation that the conversation was at an end, and the Squire looked at his companion in helpless bewilderment.

"What can be the meaning of this sudden flight?" he asked, and the officer shrugged his shoulders, and made an expressive gesture with his hands.

"I am not surprised," he said, quietly. "It

is only in keeping with the general mystery surrounding the Cedars and its tenants."

The mystery was destined to continue a mystery, for the days went by, and still the shutters were shut, and the doors were barred.

It is true the furniture remained intact, and the servants still inhabited the house, but the Stuarts had disappeared as completely as if they had never been.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### NEW SCENES.

It is now time to return to Rosalind, whom we left standing by the pool, after Sir Kenneth had departed.

She waited until he was well on his way, then she gathered her cloak well about her, and started quickly in the opposite direction, with the intention of reaching a station she knew to be about a mile distant.

Then she decided she would take a ticket, and go to some far-off country place, where she could stay quietly for a few weeks, and give herself time to recover the nervous strain she had been enduring ever since she and Sir Kenneth first met.

She would not think of him. She tried to dismiss him from her mind, and concentrate all her attention on the future—the future which stretched before her in a dim, colourless vista of lonely years, haunted by an eternal regret!

As yet she had made no plans concerning what she would do, or where she would live. Her horizon had been bounded by her marriage, and the consummation of her vengeance; beyond it she had not looked.

It now behoved her to think of it, for her stock of money was very small—some ten or eleven pounds, which she had saved out of the salary given her by Squire Charlton—and she had only herself to depend upon.

The latter consideration—indeed, the former as well—would have troubled her very little, if she had felt that sense of triumphant elation which she had promised herself as the result of ruining Sir Kenneth's happiness. "A life for a life, a tooth for a tooth," this had been her text, and now that she had carried it to the bitter end she was only conscious of the misery she had so ruthlessly wrought, and Sir Kenneth's expression of deep, pained melancholy as he bade her farewell, haunted her with a cruel persistency that she felt almost as a reproach.

No, there was very little triumph in her sensations. If she had, indeed, avenged Maraquita's death it had been at the sacrifice of her own peace of mind, as well as the desolation of her own life.

"It is natural that I should feel depressed now, and unable to form any definite plans," she said to herself, as she drew the soaked garments closer around her, and shivered with the chill of the drizzling rain. "Even happy people could hardly keep up their good spirits on such an evening as this."

The weather was indeed miserable, and the shadows of twilight were beginning to close in over the misty landscape. Rosalind had neither eaten nor drunk during the livelong day, and a sense of exhaustion stole over her.

She felt she would not be able to reach the station unless, in the meantime, she refreshed herself with a little food. The sight of a small wayside public-house, bearing the sign of the "Magpie," and with lights glimmering redly through the short crimson blind, was very welcome to her just then, although, at any other time, she would have hesitated before entering an inn, badly as she might have needed its hospitality.

The landlady looked at her with a curiosity that speedily changed to pity. The beautiful white face was tragic with a depth of misery that would have touched the hardest heart, and the drenched clothes clinging round the tall slender figure appealed at once to the good woman's housewifely instincts.

"Get you a cup of tea? Why, of course, of course!" she exclaimed, bustling into the kitchen, where a bright fire was glowing. "Come in here, and dry yourself! It's more comfortable like than the parlour, where there's no fire. Ye see, it's too early to begin fires yet, being, as one may say, only the fag end of the summer."

Rosalind followed her, and sank wearily into a Windsor arm-chair, which Mrs. Biggs had drawn up close to the fender. The rest was very grateful to her—until now she had hardly known how tired she was.

"Take your things off!" said the landlady, and the girl mechanically obeyed. Mrs. Biggs watching her with an undisguised curiosity, that was partially gratified by the sight of the wedding ring on her finger. "So you are married!" she said, in a tone of approval.

Rosalind started and coloured, but instead of replying, reiterated her request for a cup of tea, and the landlady bustling put the kettle on the fire.

"Well, well!" she observed, "your husband must be fine and anxious about you—out, all alone, such an evening as this! Where may you have come from?"

"From Aston," rejoined the girl, briefly; then, before Mrs. Biggs had time to ask her any more questions, she added, hastily,—

"Can you bring me the newspaper?—to-day's or yesterday's, I don't mind which."

The paper was brought, and soon afterwards tea was ready; but even after she had partaken of it Rosalind felt too thoroughly exhausted to push on to the station, so she decided to stay at the "Maggie" until the morning, and then resume her journey.

Meanwhile she tried to prevent herself from dwelling on her own affairs by an assiduous attention to the newspaper, but what she read she could not afterwards have told, for it made no impression on her tired brain—except one advertisement, which she decided to answer. It ran thus—

"A widow and daughter living in a small country house would be glad to receive a lady as boarder. Terms very moderate. Address, M. S., Weir Cottage, P., Devonshire."

Four days later Rosalind found herself inside a cumbersome vehicle, forming a compromise between a coach and an omnibus, on her way to Weir Cottage. She had spent six hours in the train, and the rest of her journey had to be completed by road, for Weir Cottage was in such a lonely and hilly part of the country that no railway ran within ten miles of it.

This was an advantage, so far as Rosalind was concerned. What she longed for was perfect rest, uninterrupted quiet, by whose aid she might recover her wonted strength of mind and tranquillity, and these seemed promised her by the letter she had received from the mistress of the cottage—Mrs. Selwin, who assured her that she should be free to go and come as she liked, and that the only thing she feared was that the lady would find her cottage too solitary.

It was a pretty little house, lying down in a cleft of the hills, and with a tiny stream whose fern-fringed banks made a picture in themselves trickling through the ground. The walls, porch, even the chimneys, were covered with climbing roses, whose prime was now past.

A few blossoms still lingered, however, breathing out a faint perfume, and in the prim, box edged garden dahlias and asters were flourishing bravely.

The sea was about a quarter of a mile distant, and the glorious colour of the water, contrasting with the varied tints of the cliffs, now purple with heather, amongst which a few sheep peacefully browsed, formed a lovely background to the flower-wreathed little cottage.

The widow herself, a quiet, unpretentious sort of personage, and her daughter, who was a pretty, brown-eyed girl of eighteen, made a

favourable impression on Rosalind, and their welcome was kind and courteous.

That they were simple-minded, unsuspecting people was proved by the fact that they had been content to accept a week's rent in advance in lieu of references, and they asked no questions concerning her antecedents, taking her for what she represented herself—a young married woman who had come into the country for change of air.

Rosalind called herself Mrs. Hawtrey. To have assumed her husband's title would have been distinctly embarrassing; but it would have been contrary to her declared intention if she had retained her own maiden name, as she was more than once tempted to do.

She had a bed-room and sitting-room to herself; but, as a rule, she took her meals with Mrs. Selwin and her daughter, who were both charmed with their new lodger.

And, indeed, more worldly-wise people than themselves would have found it hard to resist the charms of Rosalind's beauty, and quiet, high-bred manners.

She was one of those women who seem born to command love, as well as respect and admiration—a very queen amongst women.

The first few days passed quietly enough. No visitors came to disturb the even routine of life at Weir Cottage, and Rosalind sought to forget her troubles in long, lonely walks amongst the hills and on the sea coast.

Her thoughts often went back to Edith—sweet, loving Edith, who would think her old friend so ungrateful for not writing to her.

"But I cannot write to her," Rosalind said to herself. "I cannot tell her the motives of my action, and not knowing them, she will only think me treacherous and wicked. Well, perhaps it is better so; it will make her regret me the less."

The only incident that broke the monotony of the first week was an advertisement in the "Agony" column of a morning newspaper, which chanced to catch Rosalind's eye.

"If the lady who parted from her husband on the 18th August, at Aston, in Kent, will communicate with the undersigned, pecuniary arrangements will be made for her advantage."

Then followed the address of Sir Kenneth's solicitors. Rosalind immediately wrote a reply, absolutely refusing to accept a farthing of the baronet's money, and this letter she got Mrs. Selwin to enclose to a friend in London, so that it should have the London postmark, and lead the solicitors to believe she was still in the metropolis.

One evening she chanced to be out a little later than usual. She had walked along the cliffs and then had descended to the beach below, and was wandering slowly along, lost in thought and unobservant of how near the water was to her feet.

Her reverie was disturbed by a man's voice, and, looking up, she saw before her a tall, fair, gentlemanly-looking man, singularly handsome, so far as features went, but with the marks of dissipation stamped in unmistakable characters on his face.

"Pardon me," he said, raising his hat; "may I remind you that we are having spring tides now, and it is getting near the time for high water? If you look ahead you will see that the sands are already covered, and you cannot pass the next point."

Rosalind glanced on in front, and was startled to see that what he said was true. The water was indeed lapping the face of the cliff, and the fact that she was now standing on dry beach was due to the rocks receding just here, rather far into the land.

Looking back she saw that the sands she had so lately traversed were now also submerged, and it was with considerable alarm that she said,—

"Is the water deep as yet? Do you think I can wade through it?"

"There is no necessity for you to do so if you will accept my guidance up the cliff," he said, courteously. "As you see, the path is rather steep, but it is by no means inaccessible,

and I am well accustomed to it. Will you allow me to offer you my arm?"

"Thank you," she returned, hesitating a little. To accept a stranger's escort was not altogether pleasing to her, but circumstances left her no alternative.

Besides, the gentleman evidently meant to be kind, and she owed him thanks for giving her the timely warning, and thus saving her from a serious fright, if nothing worse.

She finally took his arm, and with his help climbed up the cliffs, the ascent of which was certainly difficult, if not dangerous.

In fact she doubted whether, without his assistance, she would have been able to accomplish it.

When they reached the top she withdrew her arm and again thanked him, but in a manner implying dismissal. Her companion was, however, not so easily shaken off.

"I am going this way," he said, pointing to the direction in which she had turned. "Will you not let me have the pleasure of escorting you until our roads diverge? It is getting late, and the place is lonely."

"I am not nervous," she returned; but he declined to take the hint, and continued walking by her side and talking casually of the scenery in a manner that was so quietly respectful as to disarm resentment at his persistence. But though Rosalind endured his remarks she made her own responses as brief as possible.

"You are a stranger here, I presume?"

"Yes."

"Ah! then I have the advantage of you, for I have lived at Weir since my boyhood."

"Indeed!"

"And know every inch of the country for miles round. That, of course, goes without saying."

No reply.

"Are you," he went on, tentatively, after a pause of a few moments, "are you staying in the village of Weir, may I ask?"

"Yes."

The gentleman looked rather baffled. Evidently his companion was bent on keeping her own counsel.

But he was a persistent man, and the interest he had felt when his eyes first fell on that lovely, sorrowful face, increased with each moment.

"I hope you contemplate a long stay?"

"I cannot tell. My plans are uncertain," Rosalind responded, a little haughtily, and she was very glad when, a few minutes later, they reached a point where she had to turn off from the cliff, in the direction of Mrs. Selwin's cottage. "I will wish you good evening, sir."

"Good evening!" He bowed low, and added, quickly, "Allow me to give you my name. It is Pierce Vansittart, of Weir Castle."

## CHAPTER XV.

### A SURPRISE.

WHEN Rosalind got back to the cottage, and, during tea, told her adventure, Mrs. Selwin and her daughter exchanged glances at the mention of Mr. Vansittart's name, and looked a little uncomfortable.

"Who and what is this gentleman?" asked Rosalind, upon whom these glances had not been lost.

"Well," responded Mrs. Selwin, slowly, "he does not bear a particularly good character in the neighbourhood. He is a gentleman of old family, and ought to be respected, but—"

The pause was significant.

"Weir Castle is that grand old place whose turrets I have seen from the North Road?" added Rosalind, less for the sake of continuing the subject than for that of saying something, for it was occasionally difficult to find a topic of conversation which the widow cared to join.

"Yes. It used to be a fine old place, but it has gone to wreck and ruin lately. People do say it's mortgaged, but I don't know how true

that may be. It belongs to Mr. Vansittart's wife."

"Oh! then he is married?"

"Yes; but his wife has run away from him." Mrs. Selwin sighed, and shook her head, while she carefully gathered up the crumbs on her lap, and put them into the slop basin. "Ah, dear, dear! There was sad work at Weir Castle. It's a story one will never know the rights of, and if the poor lady was driven to do wrong, why, there are many excuses to be urged for her. She was one of the highest spirited, and prettiest creatures for miles round, but always ready to help the poor, and to speak a good word for everybody, and, in spite of her affliction, we often used to see her driving about in her little low pony carriage."

"Her affliction! What do you mean?"

"The poor lady was blind, not blind from her birth, but through some accident that no one knows anything about. She was quite young, too, and that made it all the sadder."

"Poor thing!" murmured Rosalind, sympathetically, and interested in Mrs. Selwin's disclosure.

"Ah!" added the widow, "you may well say that, Mrs. Hawtre, for, in my opinion, she was always more stung against than sinning, not but what she was passionate and high-tempered, too. Perhaps, if she had been less so, she and her husband would have got on better; but one pulled one way, and the other pulled the other, so you could not expect much peace in the home."

"Had they no children?"

"None of their own. But a nephew of Mrs. Vansittart's lived with them, a little boy named Noel, who was her brother's only son, and who, if he had lived to the age of twenty-one, would have inherited a lot of money, and an estate. But the poor child died—was poisoned."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed the listener, who had followed the story with keen attention. "Accidentally, of course?"

Mrs. Selwin shook her head dubiously.

"Well, opinions differ on that point. Some say one thing, and some say another. Anyhow, it was Mrs. Vansittart who gave him the poison, and, you see, under the terms of her brother's will, Mrs. Vansittart took all the child's property."

"It took place in this way. The boy was ill with scarlet fever, and would have no one near him but his aunt, although a nurse was sent down from a hospital in London, on purpose to attend to him. The night the accident happened the nurse was asleep in the dressing-room, and Mrs. Vansittart poured out the child's medicine and gave it him."

"Everyone blames her for doing this, because of her blindness; but you must know she was very sensitive on the score of her affliction, and no one ever made allusion to it in her presence. She would not allow anyone to lead her, and used to go about the house feeling her way, quite as if she had had her eyesight; and, indeed, she was so quick and delicate with her fingers that if you saw her walking along you would not have guessed the truth. Well, instead of giving the child his medicine, she gave him some carbolic acid, which the poor little thing must have swallowed at one gulp, and, of course, he died."

"There was an inquest held, and a verdict of 'Accidental Death' brought in; but ugly rumours arose—no one knew how—to the effect that Mrs. Vansittart had a lover, who was badly in want of money, and that she had made the mistake purposely, in order to be able to give it him."

"I, for one, never believed these tales, but there are a good many people who do, and it is quite true that shortly afterwards a young man was seen hovering about the Castle, and she finally eloped with him. That was in the spring, and though Mr. Vansittart has spent a lot of time and a lot of money making inquiries, he has never yet been able to find out where she has gone to."

"People wonder why he does not apply for

a divorce; but it is likely enough he does not care for the publicity of the thing, or, some folks say, he'll never let her get free from him because she's rich, and he has made ducks and drakes of his property."

"But, there!" added Mrs. Selwin, rising, "I'm sure, Mrs. Hawtre, you don't want to be bothered any more with Mr. Vansittart and his affairs. I expect you've had enough of him for one while. Come, Janet, clear the tea things away while I brush up the hearth," a command that Janet hastened to obey.

Rosalind had been interested in the story, but not sufficiently so to feel anything but anger when, the next day, as she was going for her usual walk, she met Mr. Vansittart, who stopped her and asked if she had recovered from the fright of the previous afternoon.

She answered rather icily that there had been no question of fright, and bowing, would have passed on had he not prevented her.

"Pardon me, Mrs. Hawtre," she started at this mention of her name, "I learn that you are staying at Weir Cottage. It must be very dull for you there, especially as there are no shops about from which you can obtain books. Will you allow me to remedy this disadvantage? I have a very fair library at the Castle, and I shall be delighted if you will give me the pleasure of lending you any volume you may care to have."

"You are very good," Rosalind answered, with a slight stare of well-bred surprise, "but I really have no claim on your kindness!"

"The kindness will be on your side," he interrupted, eagerly.

"And," she continued, without heeding the interpolation, "I was about to add that I have no desire to make one."

He seemed rather taken aback by this uncompromising refusal.

"I am afraid," he said, "my offer has not been received in the spirit I meant it. Have I offended you, Mrs. Hawtre? Believe me, I had no intention of doing so."

"Certainly. I take that for granted, and will wish you good morning."

She passed on, and he stood gazing after her, considerably discomfited by the repulse.

"A haughty beauty!" he muttered, watching the tall, *swell* form, whose gracious lines were fully revealed by the perfect simplicity of the tight-fitting black gown. "Luckily for me, I am not easily discouraged. We shall meet again, my dear Lady Disdain!"

And he kept his word, very greatly to Rosalind's annoyance, for every day, no matter how much she might vary her walks, or at what time she might start, she was sure to meet him. It seemed as if he set some watch on the cottage, and was thus kept constantly informed of her movements.

Sometimes he stopped her, and spoke a few words regarding the fineness of the morning, or the beauty of the scenery, but more often he contented himself simply with a bow and a long look.

Even at the little village church, whither the young wife went every Sunday, she was not free from this species of pursuit, for there, in the big, square red-curtained pew belonging to the Castle, sat Mr. Vansittart, and his devotions seemed to consist solely of a grave study of Rosalind's profile.

"Mr. Vansittart has reformed, I suppose," drily observed Mrs. Selwin, as they were walking home after service. "Anyhow, it's a good long time since I have seen him at church, until this morning. The Vicar won't know what to make of it."

"Everybody in church was looking at him," added pretty Janet, who herself looked as fresh as a spring violet, or a pat of golden country butter, in her dove-coloured cashmere dress—essentially a "Sunday" dress, for all the week it reposed peacefully in a long drawer, neatly folded in silver paper, with sprigs of lavender on the top. "He's a handsome man, there's no denying it."

"Handsome is as handsome does!" (noted

Mrs. Selwin, sharply; and Janet, duly rebuked by the tone in which the sententious proverb was uttered, meekly remained silent until they reached the cottage, over which a Sabbath silence reigned, for it was the rule to have cold dinner on Sundays, so as to cause less work, and the principle of "rest" was so rigidly enforced, that even the cooks and hens seemed affected by it, and carried on their squabbles in a subdued cackle.

Rosalind at once retired to her room. She was upset in no ordinary degree by this fresh evidence of Mr. Vansittart's interest in her, and as she seemed quite unable to make him understand how utterly repugnant it was to her, the only alternative left was to quit the neighbourhood.

To do this required an effort, for she had found in Weir Cottage that peace and isolation which she had so ardently desired, and although she already felt much calmer than when she came, she would have liked to remain another four or five weeks before starting forth into the world, and beginning to work afresh.

However, with a sigh, she acknowledged that, owing to Mr. Vansittart, this could not be. She was growing afraid of the man. He was so quietly persistent, his fair handsome face was so expressive of determination, and his admiration for herself so undisguised, that she almost trembled when she thought of it.

"And this is the kind of persecution I shall always be liable to!" she said to herself, bitterly, as she turned her wedding-ring round and round her slim finger. "A wedded wife, with no husband to protect her! Such men are apt to consider fair game for their persecutions!"

That the fault was her own did not make the fact any the less disagreeable—perhaps, indeed, added to it.

She finally came to the conclusion that she would go the next day to the nearest town—which was some ten miles distant—and put her name down at a governess's agency, of which she had heard Mrs. Selwin speak. If, by any means, she could obtain a situation that would suit her in Devonshire, she preferred staying there, only it must be at a distance from Weir Castle.

Accordingly she consulted with her landlady, who told her she thought a neighbouring farmer, who always drove into M— on a Monday, would give her a seat in his dog-cart, and the farmer being found willing, she drove with him to M— the next morning.

She went to the agency, but her visit was rather discouraging, for the number of people who wanted to obtain situations was largely in excess of those who had them to offer. There was nothing on the books at all likely to suit her, so she paid her fee, and put her name down, and was just about leaving, when the person who kept the agency—a middle-aged spinster of vinegary aspect and sharp manners—glanced up curiously.

"I beg pardon, did you say Mrs. Hawtre?"

"Yes."

"You are a widow, then, I presume?"

Rosalind hesitated; and then, for the first time, she saw the difficulty she was in. The ruddy colour flushed into her cheeks and her eyes fell.

"No," she returned, in a very low voice.

"I am not a widow; but my husband is—away."

"H'm!" suspiciously. "By that I suppose you mean you are separated from him?"

The young wife bowed her head without replying.

"I'm afraid, ma'am," said the spinster, with a severe lengthening of her upper lip, "I can't undertake your business. You see, I have my own good name to think of, and never having had to do with anything but respectable people—"

Rosalind did not hear the conclusion of her sentence, for with tingling cheeks and crimsoned brow she had rushed wildly out of the shop, and began walking swiftly along the pavement, hardly conscious in her agitation where she was going to.

She was brought to a sudden standstill by the sight of a gentleman strolling idly along on the other side of the road.

His back was towards her, but there was no mistaking that tall athletic figure, the swinging easy walk, the close cut curls of dark hair.

It was Sir Kenneth Hawtrey

## CHAPTER XVI.

### AN ACCIDENT.

For a moment Rosalind stood still, almost stupefied by surprise and emotion; then she turned rapidly back, and walked in the direction from which she had just come, wondering what untoward chance had brought the Baronet here, and what the consequences would have been if he had seen her!

Mr. Josiah Taylor, the man who had driven her in, had put up his horse and cart at one of the smaller inns of the town, and had arranged with Rosalind to meet her at half-past four, by which time he calculated his business would be done, and he would be ready to drive home.

It was only one o'clock now, and Rosalind's first intention had been to spend this spare time in looking over such interesting antiquities as the town could boast.

The sight of Sir Kenneth had, however, put an end to these plans, and now her only resource was to stay in a shabby little upstairs room of the inn, and wait there until it should please Mr. Josiah Taylor to come and fetch her.

As long as she lives Rosalind will never forget the wearisome monotony of that seemingly endless afternoon!

For some time she watched the passers-by from behind the curtain; then she looked at the pictures on the walls—the sailor's departure, and the sailor's return, neither of them remarkable for beauty or artistic taste.

After that she wandered restlessly up and down, and her brain took a mental photograph of that dingy parlour, with its horsehair covered couch and chairs, its round table, and aggressive chiffoier, and its myriads of flies.

The only variation was the regular striking of the clock downstairs; and oh! what a sigh of relief the girl gave as that clock struck the hour of four!

Mr. Taylor would not be long now—half an hour more and he would be ready to take her away.

Alas! half an hour—three quarters—five o'clock passed, and still the farmer did not make his appearance, and Rosalind began to wonder if an accident had happened to him.

It was quite six before he came, and another quarter of an hour had to elapse before the trap could be got ready.

At last, however, the harnessing was complete, and Rosalind got up to her seat, wondering how it was the farmer did not apologise for the delay.

Strange to say, Mr. Taylor did not open his lips to say a word more than was absolutely necessary, and they had left the town a mile behind before a certain unpleasant odour of spirits, and a general unsteadiness in her companion's demeanour, suggested to the young girl what had indeed taken place—namely, that Mr. Taylor had imbibed considerably more than was good for him.

The dilemma was an awkward one, especially as, if she got out of the trap, she would have to walk back to M—and hire another conveyance to take her to Weir.

And after all, it was very likely that the horse was used to these lapses on his master's part, and knew his way home as well without guidance as with it.

Rosalind philosophically resigned herself to her fate, determining, however, that nothing should induce her to trust herself to Mr. Josiah Taylor again.

To add to the unpleasantness of the situa-

tion it now began to get dusk; for September evenings are short, and darkness soon closes in, especially in these mountainous districts, where the hills shut out the western light.

The journey progressed in uneventful peacefulness for some time. The horse jogged steadily on, and his driver just contrived to keep hold of the reins, while, with his head sunk on his breast, he yielded himself to a species of wakeful slumber, which might, perhaps, be best described as sleeping with one eye open.

This one eye presently became aware that the road was growing darker than was altogether pleasant, and its owner roused himself with a tremendous effort.

"Come, now, Jo, my lad!—come, Josiah Taylor! Pull yourself together, man!—pull yourself together!" he exclaimed, apostrophising himself in reproachful accents. "It's getting late, and what 'll the missus say, ay, what 'll the missus say?"

The result of this self-communing was a smart application of the whip, which the horse acknowledged by starting off at a quick trot, not quick enough to satisfy Mr. Taylor however, for he again used the whip, mercilessly, as it seemed to Rosalind; and the infuriated beast resented the unmerited chastisement by beginning to kick with all his might, and then tearing off at a mad gallop, which ended in the trap and its occupants being overturned in the road.

Fortunately the vehicle was not a high one, and equally fortunately, the spot on which its two occupants were precipitated so ingloriously was a strip of green sward, soft enough to break the force of their fall.

Indeed Rosalind sprang to her feet almost immediately, and thus assured herself that her bones were intact, while Mr. Taylor dragged himself slowly into a sitting position, and then with great gravity began to anathematise his horse in language that was very far from being choice.

The poor animal was lying on its side panting, but otherwise quiet after its escapade. The trap, as Rosalind had feared, was damaged very considerably, and this made it clearly impossible to continue the journey except on foot.

The distance, she calculated, must be about four or five miles to Weir Cottage, and although, under ordinary conditions, she would have thought nothing of doing it on foot, the darkness of the evening, added to the fact of not knowing the way, made her hesitate before deciding to undertake it now.

Presently Mr. Taylor, somewhat sobered by the catastrophe, struggled to his feet and made a partial examination of the horse and trap.

"Nothing to be done with *them*," he remarked, sapiently. "The only thing is to wait till someone passes, and ask him to give us a lift."

"But no one is likely to pass on such a lonely road," observed Rosalind, forlornly.

"Lonely road, d'ye call it?" exclaimed the farmer in high dudgeon. "It's the Queen's highway, and people from M—are bound to pass along it on their way to Weir!"

Then he staggered off, muttering something about "women's pigheadedness," and evidently inclined to lay the whole blame of the accident on his companion.

It was growing a little chilly, and Rosalind tried to keep herself warm by walking smartly up and down.

Presently it became lighter. The moon, like a great silver arc, rose slowly over the shoulder of one of the hills, whose dark outline was cut with sharp distinctness against her canopy of fleecy white clouds.

This, at any rate, was an advantage, and Rosalind was just debating whether she should not walk to Weir and then send assistance to the farmer, when the sound of approaching wheels broke on her ear, and was followed by the appearance of a smart phaeton driven by Mr. Vansittart, beside whom sat a groom in mulberry-coloured livery.

Taylor called out, and he at once pulled up, but it was not until he saw and recognised Rosalind that he took the trouble to descend and express his regret that she should have been subjected to such an inconvenience.

His sympathy for Taylor was of a negative description, although, as a matter of fact, he himself was not entirely free from the farmer's complaint, for he had been at a billiard match in the afternoon, and had been afflicted with a thirst that a goodly quantity of soda and brandy had failed to satisfy.

He, however, unlike Mr. Taylor, had not lost control over his movements or his voice, and only one well accustomed to his society could have told that he had been drinking.

"The trap is plainly *hors de combat*," he observed to his groom, while pointing with his whip to the damaged vehicle. "I think, Johnson, you had better lead the horse and his master home, and," turning to Rosalind, "if you will permit me, I will drive you back to your home."

"Yes, sir," promptly responded Taylor, who, under the influence of his landlord's eye, was gathering his wits together. "That 'll certainly be the best plan. I should have led the horse home myself before, only I did not know what to do with the lady."

Vansittart smiled, and Rosalind did not attempt to contradict this unblushing avowal. A rapid review of the situation showed her that she had really no alternative but to accept the suggestion, much as she disliked laying herself under an obligation to Mr. Vansittart.

She did, it is true, make a timid proposal that she too could walk home, but it met with decided opposition from Taylor, who was clearly of opinion that he had already suffered enough from her society.

"I am afraid, Mrs. Hawtrey, that I can recommend no better plan," observed Vansittart, with feigned regret. "I may remind you that the distance is about five miles, a considerable one to walk, but one that it will not take my mare long to cover."

Without further demur Rosalind allowed him to assist her into the phaeton, after which he sprang in himself, and, a few seconds later, they were whirling along the country road at a pace that fully verified his boast of his mare's speed.

By this time the moon was fully visible above the hill-top, and the valley lay bathed in the soft glow of her radiance. Afar-off the sea moved gently like a large lake of rippling silver, and, even at this distance, the breaking of the waves on the pebbly shore reached the ear in a low, musical moan.

"Is it not a lovely night, Mrs. Hawtrey?" said Vansittart, breaking the silence that had fallen between them. "Do you read Shakespeare? I am sure you do. We might say with him,—

"The moon shines bright—in such a night as this,

When the sweet wind did gently kiss the trees,  
And they did make no noise—in such a night,  
Troilus, methinks, mounted the Trojan walls,  
And sighed his soul towards the Trojan tents  
Where Cressid lay that night."

"Quoting poetry has something ridiculous in it in the daytime, but it sounds appropriate under such circumstances as these, does it not?"

"The lines you repeated are very beautiful," evasively returned Rosalind, by no means pleased at the direction the conversation was taking.

"They were inspired by a beautiful subject," he answered, looking at her profile, from which she had some time ago thrown back the veil.

She kept her eyes averted from him, but he could see the lovely curve of cheek, the dark, finely-pencilled brows, the milk-white throat, and the delicate tendrils of hair that curled round it.

"I want to ask you a question, Mrs. Haw-

treys. Is it possible that a beautiful woman can be unaware of her beauty?"

"How can I answer such a question, Mr. Vansittart?" demanded Rosalind, with some impatience.

"If you cannot I do not know who can! You must know how lovely you are, and yet you pretend unconsciousness of the most important factor of a woman's life!"

Rosalind said nothing, but she heartily wished herself safe in the cottage with Mrs. Selwin, and blamed herself for having fancied Mr. Vansittart's gentlemanly instincts would have protected her from possible unpleasantness.

To her dismay Mr. Vansittart pulled the mare up, and let her proceed at a pace but slightly removed from a walk.

"Do you mind driving a little faster?" she said boldly. "I am so very late as it is, and I know my landlady will be alarmed as to my safety."

"If I measure your landlady's alarm against my pleasure in your society, I find the balance is on my side," he rejoined, coolly. "Your landlady, besides, has many opportunities of talking to you. I have not, so I must make the best of this one!"

(To be continued.)

## MY LADY OF THE LAKE.

—10:—

### CHAPTER XLVI.—(continued.)

"CELESTINE," said Frank Masculine, very earnestly, "you cannot be well to talk like this. Why, little one, you are a regular sun-beam! Only let me transplant you to a home of our own, and you will find that I never complain of lack of sunshine!"

"But I cannot. I have promised!"

"In Heaven's name speak out, Madame St. Croix! These mysterious phrases simply torture me. What have you promised? and to whom?" and leaning towards her he held both her hands in his, and looked intently into her eyes for her reply.

"Then you know nothing?"

"Nothing—not a word!"

"Were you aware that Mrs. Roslyn is married and has one daughter?"

"Married? She is a widow, is she not?"

"No, her husband is alive, and he has sent for her."

A low, soft whistle escaped the lips of Frank Masculine.

"My poor uncle!" he murmured, "he doubtless has been in this secret all along. Dear old fellow! I'll warrant that he has suffered! Now I understand his position and his conduct."

"Does he love Mrs. Roslyn?" inquired Madame St. Croix, very softly. "Oh! what trouble there is in the world! And he is so good! It seems hard that it should have come his way."

"He is wondrously good! and no doubt his love for that noble woman, Mrs. Roslyn, has made him a better man than even he would have been without it; for there is nothing which elevates and purifies more than deep and unselfish affection for a worthy object; so even though he must have suffered in the knowledge that she was unattainable, still he can never really have had cause to regret that fate threw them together. By the light of what you have just told me I can understand my uncle as I have never comprehended him before, dearly as I love him! Celestine, we must do our best to cheer him, when she has gone! How we shall miss her!"

"You will, my friend; but it is that I have been trying to tell you! You must comfort the kind, dear doctor, but I am going to England with Mrs. Roslyn. I could not find it in my heart to leave her—in deed, I cannot! Think how lonely her journey would have been now, if I had not decided to accompany

her. Frank, painful as it is to do so, I must say good-bye to you; and oh! my dear, I cannot help feeling that it may be for ever!" and the poor little hands were clasped and unclasped nervously, to still her mental pain.

Frank Masculine sat regarding her with blank astonishment.

"You have knocked all the wind out of my sails!" he said, after an uncomfortable pause. "Celestine, Celestine, I never expected this! To lose my friend and adviser, and my little love all at one stroke, one turn of fortune's wheel! Oh, child! you cannot find it in your heart to leave Mrs. Roslyn, but you can me. You think of her loneliness, you forget mine! You can say good-bye to me, who love you more than life, but you cannot speak it to her. Yet I would give up all the world for you, and think it well lost! Little one, must it be so?" he questioned, passionately. "Let me tell our good friend how I love you—that we love one another. You do love me, Celestine, do you not?" and he looked into the "windows of her soul" as though he would read the soul itself within, with earnest, beseeching eyes. She raised hers to his, all soft with the sorrow in her heart, and placed her two hands in his.

It was scarcely the look of passionate devotion which she had cast upon her first love Henri St. Croix, the handsome and fascinating artist who had won her maiden fancy, but it was one of real and deep affection, and satisfied the not too requiring nature of the young doctor.

"Yes, I do care for you very much, oh! please believe it; but I have promised Mrs. Roslyn, and I cannot change."

"She will give you back your word, if you let me explain it all to her," he cried, eagerly, his fair face flushed with hope and excitement.

"You forget all she has done for me, Frank. Suppose her daughter gives her no welcome, and her husband is unkind? It may be so; he must be far from a nice man ever to have parted from so sweet and perfect a woman. He can have no love for her, and possibly he has taught her child to hate her. She has not seen her since she was a wee creature. No; I see there may be deep sorrow and even humiliation in store for my dear friend, who saved me from poverty, sickness, and death! I owe my life to her, and I must dedicate it to her service; at any rate, until I know she is beloved and happy."

"Then," whispered Celestine's lover, "you will let me run over to England and fetch you home, my darling? I would, of course, greatly prefer to keep you with me now; but if my firm little girl has quite decided as to what is her duty, I know enough of her character to be sure that I may as well be silent. Still, darling, with your permission, I may live in hope? Tell me I may come for my bride very soon, and make me, if not quite happy, as near so as I can be apart from you?"

"Speak to me, small woman, and tell me that the parting is only for a little time, that we shall soon meet again, to part no more while Heaven spares us to one another? Oh, Celestine! you do not dream how precious you are to me, or you would not remain so long silent."

"I think I do know, Frank, by looking into my own heart. And, my dear, I have tried so hard not to love you like that; but I could not help it."

"And feeling that, you still leave me?" he asked, in surprise.

"Yes," she said, gravely. "I feel impelled to go. There is some strange influence, which bids me accompany my kind friend, beyond my love for her. I dare not stay now, Frank, dearly as I prize your affection. Heaven grant that she may be happy, and that things may end well for us. Frank, I should be indeed contented as your wife. Mine is not a nature to do well alone. I want a stronger one to lean on. And I am so sorry to say good-bye; still I must go."

"You will let me come and see you again?" he asked.

"Better not, dear. The pain of parting once is enough; twice would be too much. Heaven bless you!"

"May it bless you, and keep you safe, little Celestine," answered her lover, tenderly. "I can but do as you wish. But you will let me know when you start, even though I may not see you again alone? What would Mrs. Roslyn say if I did not go to see you off?"

"As you wish, Frank," she returned, quietly. "But let our real good-bye be here and alone."

He took her at her word, and that parting was spoken looked in one another's arms. Then he obeyed her, and went his way, sorrow and joy strangely mingling in his heart.

As for Celestine she felt as though the sun had gone behind a bank of dark clouds.

No wonder Mrs. Roslyn found her silent, sad, and with tear-stained eyes, for she had learnt the lesson how dear Frank Masculine was to her!

### CHAPTER XLVII.

"DON'T SAY IT, GLADYS; SUCH WORDS CAN HAVE NO MEANING FOR US."

MR. ANDREWS lost no time in looking up his cousin at his London address. But very much to his disgust he learnt that he had been on the Continent for some time, and that the date of his return was altogether uncertain. Moreover, Mr. Andrews, who questioned with caution as to Guy Forrester's affairs, could in no wise understand the answers which he received to his queries.

One thing he quickly saw: that his cousin had been living as a single man, and a very wild and reckless one too; and that the fact of there being a Mrs. Guy was wholly undreamed of by those who knew him.

Gerald Andrews could make neither head nor tail of the matter.

After considerable thought he went to an hotel, and continued his inquiries, which, although wholly unsatisfactory, did not prevent his enjoying a very pleasant evening at the theatre. And having there met an acquaintance, he discussed with him a tempting little supper afterwards, and learnt all there was to be known of the movements of his artistic cousin, who was at that time spending his money royally in Paris, and getting all the pleasure which it was possible to obtain out of his life.

It was evident to the parson that Guy was flush of coin; and his difficulties were pressing, so he made up his mind to cross the "silver streak" and get what he could out of him by friendly words or unfriendly threats. The former to be tried first, the latter as a dernier resort.

Having decided upon this course, Gerald Andrews laid himself down to sleep, and slept soundly—the sleep of the just, of course. His parishioners of Southmore would have told you so, at any rate.

The following morning he emerged from his room looking very unlike a parson, ate a comfortable meal, sauntered down Bond-street and Regent-street, and later on started for Dover, en route for Calais and Paris.

His journey did not seem the longer because he travelled *à la-tête* with a pretty, saucy young girl of some eighteen years of age, who was seen off by an ancient dame, who was evidently not her mother, for the parting seemed to affect neither of them, beyond the circumstance that the old lady was very fidgety about the safety of the younger one's luggage, and kept the solemn-looking footman who attended her well on the move looking after it, although he reported it times without number to be in the van.

It is most unlikely that the ancient one would have allowed these two young people to travel alone together, had there not been a

most respectable old matron half asleep already in the corner.

But somehow it was discovered by the guard that she was travelling with a second-class ticket, and she was hustled out unceremoniously when the train was almost in motion.

Upon which the ancient dragon became restless, and requested the bright girl to change compartments; but she appeared rather to enjoy the situation, and made the first advance to the owner of the golden moustache, in the shape of a shy but saucy glance, and he began to take a decided interest in his companion.

"Gladys," said the old lady, in a stage whisper, "you really must not travel alone with a stranger. What would your uncle say?"

"It is very dreadful, auntie, of course," admitted the girl, with mock solemnity. "But I couldn't possibly get out. I should be quite afraid. See! there is the guard with the flag. The train is about to start. I told you so; we're off. Ta ta, take care of yourself, auntie. Now don't get into mischief now you have lost me as your chaperon. Yes, oh, yes! I'll write to tell you how I get to Dover. Good-bye, good-bye!" and having waved a very pretty little well-gloved hand out of the window, the girl sank back upon the cushions with a sigh of relief.

Gerald was far too clever to attempt to rush into conversation, even though the maiden had given him a glance from beneath the pretty dark lashes which shaded her "eyes of most unholly blue!"

He was quite quiet for a while, and let her feel dull. Then he asked whether she would like the window open or shut, and helped her stow away those numerous loose articles with which nearly all ladies manage to travel.

Having made himself useful to her, he glided softly and quietly into conversation, which she met with a half shy, wholly mischievous response; and before Dover was reached the two had become real friends, with a private understanding between them, that was that Gladys St. John was the niece of the very man who was keeping him Mr. Andrews, out of the living of "St. Clement's the Great," at which he had aimed, and to become rector of which he had taken upon himself the responsibility of his ordination vows.

When first he found out this fact he thought he was in a dilemma, but he speedily saw how it might be turned to advantage, for he felt that Miss St. John was a girl to be trusted, and confided in her accordingly. The girl thought none the worse of the young man who asked her to keep his secret.

It flattered her to have such confidence reposed in her, and he went quite the right way to make a firm friend of her; telling her all the particulars of his life in his own gentle colouring, which she might possibly some day see represented in harder shades.

Mr. Andrews had heard that all Mr. St. John's money was to descend to his only relative, a great niece, and he thought that when he should step into that good old man's shoes, was the right and proper time for him to settle down.

Having seen that great niece, his opinion grew more confirmed, and it seemed to him that it would be an eminently proper sort of arrangement that she should remain in the old home which had sheltered her since early childhood, when she was left to her great uncle's care by her dying widower father.

The lady whom Gladys called auntie at the station was really no relation at all, but was a companion of most respectable connections, who had from childhood been trying to manage the skittish little colt, whom good old Mr. St. John looked upon with servile devotion and admiration.

The old bachelor had naturally had no very near and dear ties of his own, and all his affections centred themselves on the bright, saucy girl, who was alike the pleasure and torment of his existence.

The pleasure—for he felt the influence of

her affection—and recognised the honesty and truth of her nature.

The torment, because Gladys was for ever out of one scrape into another, to the extreme horror of her companion, Mrs. Gardner, who never ceased in her strenuous endeavours to make blue-eyed Gladys into an old woman, almost before she was a young one. And Gladys, ready to rebel upon feeling the curb, showed upon several never-to-be-forgotten occasions how untrained and unbroken she was.

These terrible issues between Gladys and her Dragon were always referred to Mr. St. John.

He was fully aware that "discipline must be maintained," and he did his best to look severe; and requesting that Gladys might be left with him to talk to, he would begin with as grave a face and stern a tone as possible; while his lecture was stopped as soon as the door was closed upon Mrs. Gardner, by two white round arms, a pair of pleading blue eyes, and a red rosebud of a mouth.

Such arguments would prove unanswerable to most men. They did to the great uncle of Gladys St. John. And although the girl always returned to Mrs. Gardner's presence with a melancholy aspect, her heart was dancing within her, for she loved her old uncle; and well knew that she could twist him around her white, taper, little finger.

But Gladys was fond of secrets, and she and Mr. St. John kept this one from the ancient Dragon.

She well knew that Mrs. Gardner must have some threat to hold over her, and she preferred her uncle to any other, and even found amusement in it, glorying in her influence over the old man.

And those big guns—"What will your uncle say?"—"What will your uncle think?" sounded in her ears to be sure, but fell harmless upon the fire-proof walls of her battery. She was well aware that whatever came and went she should have her own way with Mr. St. John.

But how was Gladys's Dragon to know this? for he looked as stern as he knew how to do when the girl's wrongdoings were brought to his notice, and Gladys herself usually dropped her jaw to an appropriate angle, begging Mrs. Gardner not to tell her uncle; while she and that uncle thoroughly understood one another. And, parson though he was, being too old to be especially naughty himself, he enjoyed the naughty acts of his great niece all the more, even though he did his best to put on a pretence of being shocked.

Little by little Gladys let out all these secrets of her home life, and she and Gerald Andrews enjoyed them together. She certainly thought she had never met such a jolly and pleasant clergyman before—those who visited at her great uncle's house considering it necessary to remember the colour of their cloth in all their conversation. Mr. Andrews explained his views to Gladys with warmth concerning the nature of his costume.

"I cannot at all see why a parson is to walk about placarded like a 'sandwich-man'; it can do no good, and it is not usual in any other profession," he said. "An officer gets out of his uniform as soon as his duty is over, and a barrister never appears out of the Law Courts in his wig and gown. I am always most particular in my own parish, but out of it I think I have the right to wear just what I choose, and I do it. Not only is my theory pleasant, but I hold that it is right. A man so innocently brings discredit upon 'the cloth.' A parson at the theatre, for instance, is a thing talked of as though the wretched man had committed a crime. If he were not a clergyman no one would remark upon it at all. The fact is, Miss St. John, there is no harm whatever in the man going there, it is the coat—the poor inanimate bit of black cloth which causes so much to-do to be made about nothing. Now is it not much better to lay it aside?"

Gladys admitted that she had not considered the subject before, but left that railway carriage a convert to the theory that clergymen, like officers, should have their uniform for their duty, and be allowed to wear *mufti* for their pleasure, and to bright, wilful Gladys the duty part of life was so far but little thought of.

She and Gerald Andrews planned a lovely scheme between them. Gladys was, upon her return home, to tell her uncle that she had met the man who was to be his successor.

They went so far as to discover that they were relations of some sort, and they promised to be friends and comrades too, with clasped hands, as two men might have done, save for the lingering pressure of the hands, which would scarcely have been felt had such been the case.

Gladys promised her newly-made friend to get old Mr. Clements St. John to invite him to stay at the Rectory, and he looked at her with amused and admiring eyes.

"Little witch!" he murmured, with a final pressure of the slender fingers. "I don't know how you are going to manage it, but if anyone can do it, you can; and I will assure you one thing, if I am asked I will come!"

"You shall be asked!" she retorted, with a saucy toss of her golden head; but I make one bargain—even though I agree with you—do not air advanced opinions before my dear old uncle. Recollect, although he spoils his naughty little niece, he is a man of the old school, even down to his bottle of port after dinner."

"Oh, I will suit myself to my company, never fear!" laughed Gerald, "and shall not at all object to the old port! If the truth must be told, it is a weakness of mine."

"And don't bring any *mufti* at all!"—chimed in Gladys, merrily, "for Mrs. Gardner is a very good woman, but is quite capable of searching your portmanteau for evidence against you, should she take a dislike to your moustache, which will probably shock her in a clergyman."

"What a dreadful creature! Why do you keep her, Miss St. John?"

"Well, you see, uncle believes in her. (She was the wife, and is the widow, of his greatest man friend). If I don't, what does it matter? I know all her foibles, and how to circumvent her. Uncle says I must have a dragon, and I feel I might be in worse hands, for the old lady would have to get up very early to find me out," and the girl's laughter rang out like silvery chimes.

It was contagious, and Mr. Andrews joined in.

"I can quite believe that," he admitted; "but will not Mrs. Gardner recollect me? That would be a crusher!"

"Don't be crushed. She is very woolly, and usually gets hold of the wrong end of the stick, and uncle knows it. He will take no notice of aught she says. Moreover, she could never put a name to a face without help since I have known her. I'll assist her, you may be sure, the *wrong way*. Oh, dear, here is Dover! I am so sorry," and the bright eyes were lifted trustfully to the admiring ones of her companion.

"Why?" he asked.

"Because—because—I'll tell the truth—I am sorry to say good-bye," she said, softly.

"Don't say it, Gladys," he whispered, with his eyes looking with dangerous earnestness into hers. "Don't say it, Gladys; such words can have no meaning for us. By hook or by crook we shall certainly meet again."

He held both her hands, and had more than half a mind to steal a kiss from the tempting cherry lips; but the train steamed into the station sooner than he expected, and Gladys and he parted suddenly, ensconcing themselves in opposite corners of the carriage for the benefit of the friends who were upon the platform to meet her.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND.

Mrs. ANDREWS took every care of herself upon this as upon all other occasions. Having ascertained the hour the steambot started, he settled himself down to a very comfortable dinner at the Pier Hotel, and made acquaintance in a "hey fellow, well met" style with one or two gentlemen in the coffee-room, who he found were likely to be fellow passengers; then he strolled down with them to the pier, smoking a choice Havana, and was soon on board the *Undine* bound for Calais.

It was a lovely evening, and the sea was as calm as a mill pond. Mr. Andrews greatly enjoyed the crossing, and as he stood on the deck, watching the white cloudlets ascend into the clear sky, his thoughts were with Gladys St. John, and he conjured up the sweet young face of the bright, saucy girl and smiled.

"She is a dear little soul," he murmured; "I have fallen upon my legs in meeting her. She will not forget me, and both she and her fortune are worth having," and he stroked his blonde moustache with perfect contentment as he moved slowly along.

It was, of course, very late when he reached Calais, so he secured a bed for the night, and went on the following morning by train.

When he reached Paris he had some difficulty in finding Mr. Forrester's studio; but at length he succeeded in doing so, and discovered his cousin in some very elaborate lodgings, lounging in embroidered cap and slippers, a regular sultan in appearance.

He took the arrival of his cousin very coolly indeed.

"Hallo, Gerald!" he said, lazily extending his hand, "what wind has blown you across the Channel? You are about the last person I expected to see. However, since you are here, pray make yourself at home."

"I have every intention of doing that, my dear boy—rest assured," laughed the parson. "I should not have come all this distance if I had not meant to be heard. Now, Guy, what is the meaning of all this; you had better speak out?"

"Speak out! What do you mean?"

"Well, first of all, you must remember that I assisted at your wedding, and yet I find that you passed as a bachelor in town, and that you are still passing as a bachelor in Paris. This is not as it should be, and I don't like the look of it!"

"You are a nice sort of fellow to turn lecturer," laughed Guy; "I suppose it is from being a parson, you are obliged to preach, even out of the pulpit. But, dear boy, I wouldn't if I were you; it does not suit you one little bit. The moral and religious is not your line at all!"

"Very possibly not; but still there are things which I should stop at. If I did not mean to be kind to a girl, why, I wouldn't marry her. More especially a pretty young creature like your wife!"

"Hush!" returned the other; "it is not pleasant to have one's private affairs known," and he glanced uneasily over his shoulder.

"I dare say not; but I'll tell you what it is, Guy: I want to know what you have done with the girl. I have prospects, you know, and I have no mind to see them blighted. You may hear that I have married before long!"

"The Dickens I may! Well, Gerald, I won't say I think the lady is to be congratulated!" And the artist seemed heartily amused at the idea.

"I'm delighted to afford you so much entertainment, Guy," he retorted, in a nettled tone of voice; but I can tell you, if I marry, my wife shall have no cause to regret it. There is a time in every man's life when he must settle down, and I must do it like others!"

Guy Forrester took his cigar out of his mouth and gazed at his visitor in unfeigned astonishment, while a mocking light rested in his eyes.

"Dear boy, are you out of health? You cannot fail to know the old saying—"the devil

was ill—the devil a saint would be! The devil got well—the devil a saint was he!" Gerald, what's the matter with you? Make a clean breast of it, and you will feel better!"

"Well, for one thing, I have taken a fancy to a very pretty girl."

"With a very pretty fortune at her back, I'll warrant."

"That goes without telling; but it is no humbug, Guy. She's a delightful little creature!"

"Of course; but how long will it last? You'll change your mind when you see a prettier face."

"But I never shall see a prettier one," returned the other.

"Well, time proves all things—"she says, sara! We won't argue the point; and after all there is, I suppose, such a thing as fate!"

"No doubt; and I have met mine!"

"Let me condole with you, Gerald."

"I cannot quite see why."

"No? but you will some day."

"I am content to wait till then to gain the experience you speak of. I'm in no hurry for it at all, I can tell you. And now for a serious talk. I have come a long way to secure the opportunity, and now I mean to avail myself of it. I hope you did not make a fool of me in any way concerning that marriage of yours. I have no mind to pick your chestnuts out of the fire, my dear fellow—not if I know it. Burnt fingers are unpleasant things, and I mean to avoid them if possible."

"You're all right; you need not fidget about it. I got the 'special' straight from the Bishop himself. Is not that good enough for you?"

"Of course you told him that the young lady was very much under age, and that you married her without her father's consent?"

"Who told you that either the one or the other was the case? You saw the licence."

"Yes; and I saw the lady, and she was a girl in her teens."

"I don't admit it; but, for the sake of argument, let us say she had not reached the magic age of twenty-one—what then? It is only between me and my conscience whether I say she was fifteen or fifty."

"Your *what*, Guy? Good Heavens, which part of you is it, and where do you keep it? That was an article you were devoid of when we were friends in Jersey, at any rate."

"Bother Jersey!" exclaimed the artist, irritably. "I should have thought your own reminiscences of the place were not of the pleasantest. What is the use of ripping up the past?"

"What, indeed! It lets out the sawdust, eh? Well, I shall prefer to speak of the present. How is Mrs. Guy, and where?"

"Confound Mrs. Guy, and you too!" cried the irate artist, flinging down the end of his cigar, and springing to his feet. "I'll tell you what it is, Gerald, I never knew you in such a disagreeable mood before, and I don't like it. If you are going on like this I shall be off!"

"No; I don't think you will, dear boy," said Mr. Andrews, somewhat insolently. "I thought I had made it plain that I have come to Paris to see you."

"Hunted me down in fact."

"Oh! no; between relations such expressions would not be polite. Sit down again, Guy, and speak out. You might as well do it now as later."

And he looked his cousin firmly in the face. "What is it you want to know?" asked Guy, doggedly.

"I am afraid your memory is getting defective."

"No; it is not. You want to know about May; but why you should, I cannot quite see, and I consider you are unnecessarily prying into my private affairs."

"Oh, indeed! Well, my dear fellow, fortunately your adverse opinion will not affect my peace of mind."

(To be continued.)

## WAITING.

—30—

To her heart she whispered "Courage!" When she heard the north winds blow, And saw in the winding valley, The gleam of the rushing snow.

She looked toward the sunset And smiling, kissed his ring. "Courage, O heart!" she whispered; "He's coming in the spring."

"Hope, O heart!" she whispered, When she walked the April woods, With the mellow west winds bringing The balm of countless buds, And heard how the mountain-torrent To the valley stream replied. "He'll come with June," she whispered, And kissed his ring and sighed.

To her heart she whispered "Patience!" In the long still summer nights, When the white moon looked upon her O'er the dark pine-ruffled heights. "He'll come with autumn's dawning," She said, amid her fears. And, in the morning twilight, She kissed his ring with tears.

Ah me! the golden summer Has vanished like a dream, And grey mists mark the windings Of the sullen valley stream. Oh, how the wild rain patters! And how the sad winds moan! And high at her storm-swept casement, My lady stands—alone.

C. F. W.

## THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER.

—30—

## CHAPTER XXV.

LILLIAN WYNDHAM stood alone under the boughs of an American willow. Her fair face showed signs of unusual agitation, her small white hands were clasped together convulsively.

The splendour of her dress, the radiance of the diamonds in her hair and on her sleeve-knots seemed to mock her misery.

She was in a mood that night to feel "the world well lost for love," and she had made her one great effort to redeem the past and save the future in a wild appeal to ears that would not listen.

Now, crushed and humiliated, she told herself that she had been an unmitigated fool, and stamped the ground with her tiny foot, which seemed made for something better than to express indignation.

Then she leant her smooth white forehead against the hard wood of a branch, and wondered if death would not be better than life after such a miserable disappointment.

But no! the mere thought of death recalled her to her more usual self with a shiver. To die would be too dreadful—to go to a place where the loveliest of toilettes and the most glorious beauty be of no account, would seem to her frivolous soul like utter annihilation.

She would cling to life and make the best bargain she could, and, after all, there was solid consolation in thirty thousand pounds a year, which she could not find in the whole realm of sentiment.

She would take it whilst she could, in spite of all Paul's efforts to prevent her. Yes, she would be Lady Farquhar, and wear the diamonds for ever after as her inalienable right. And those who had snubbed her should pay court to her, and those who had looked down on her should look up, and The Towers should be the merriest and the loudest house in the kingdom.

But though she defied Paul to stand in her way, she was resolved to prevent his marriage with Brenda Farquhar. That girl with the

pale, proud face should never be Mrs. Desborough.

To see her stand by his side at the altar would be enough to turn her brain. She must prevent it. But the utmost cunning would be needed, lest he in his anger should turn the tables on her.

Under the present circumstances it was as much as she could do to make him hold his tongue, and if he once knew that she was working against him her last chance of winning Sir Eric would be gone, and then what would become of her?

Already it would be difficult to retrieve the ground she had lost that evening, when she had cast prudence to the winds and given vent to her weariness and vexation.

But Cyril Farquhar was the only man who had steadily resisted the influence of her many charms, and it would be hard if his cousin, after his slavish adulation, should follow his example.

As she thought of him he came towards her, looking as fierce and as gloomy as if he were Apollyon himself.

He had just told some servants to see after a gentleman who had fallen down, but not to say a word about it to their master or mistresses.

He pointed vaguely in the direction of the spot where Cyril was lying, and walked off, intending to find Mrs. Wyndham, with whom, as he expressed it, "he had several bones to pick."

But when she came quietly out of the shadow, and stood before him, with the sweetest of smiles upon her lips, and a small low cry of welcome, all his harsh thoughts vanished, as the rain-drops before the sun.

He drew a deep breath, and looked down at her with fondest admiration, softening all the lines of his handsome face.

"Why have you treated me so badly?" she asked, softly, before he had time to put the same question to her.

"Hasn't it been the other way up? Didn't you send me off to fetch your fan, and flirt with Desborough directly my back was turned?"

"I deny it absolutely. If I ever flirt with anyone it is with you, and you should be the last person to scold me," looking up at him with the tenderest reproach in her blue eyes.

"Then what makes you watch Desborough like a detective?" his anger returning as he remembered his wrongs. "You can't bear to let him out of your sight. When I'm away from you I can't get it out of my head that there's some mystery between you."

Her head drooped, and she clasped her hands tightly together, for she could scarcely restrain the impulse to make a clean breast of it, and tell him everything.

To-night she was completely upset, and off her balance, unable to calculate with her usual prudence, or to wear her habitual mask of indifference; and the consciousness that Sir Eric was watching her closely made it still more difficult for her to retain her composure.

Suddenly she raised her head, and drew up her pretty throat with sad dignity.

"I counted you as one of my best friends, Sir Eric, and now you think yourself privileged to insult me."

"Insult you? Nothing was farther from my thoughts. Good Heavens! I'm not such a brute as that. Only can't you see that I'm half mad with jealousy?" in a voice trembling with excitement.

"I can see that you are half mad, or you would not have dared to say what you did," with an air of injured virtue, turning slowly away.

He pressed his hand over his burning forehead, racking his brains to know what he had said. But his own words had completely passed from his memory.

Had he been rough to her? The mere thought was enough to send him after her in a mood of the most abject submission.

He felt that if he let her go now she would be lost to him for ever. With a few long

strides he was by her side, and, though she apparently took no notice, her heart throbbed with a feeling of triumph. She had not answered one of his questions, and yet he had come back to her at once!

"Will you let me beg your pardon a thousand times?" he asked, hurriedly. "I don't know what I've done; but you know I would rather have hanged myself than said anything to vex you. What can I do to make you forgive me?"

"The only thing you can do, at present, is to take me into the ball-room at once, as if nothing had happened. To-morrow I will decide if it is necessary for me to leave The Towers."

"You are not going to leave me? Anything but that!" his face absolutely as white as his shirt front.

"That will depend upon you," and she held out her hand to him with a smile.

He kissed it passionately.

"Lillian! Lillian!" he almost gasped, bending down so low that she felt his breath on her forehead.

"Poor fellow," she said, with a half-amused look straight up into his agitated face. "I believe you care for me as much as most people."

"Farquhar! Farquhar! Oh, here you are!" cried Lord Pinkerton, in a tone of relief, as he appeared at the nearest window. "Lady Manville, after breaking her jaws with a hundred yawns, has got into the carriage, the McIntoshes are safely packed into the other thing, with half-a-dozen men to look after them, and we are only waiting for Miss Farquhar."

"Take her with you in the brougham," Mrs. Wyndham suggested, as they hurried through the empty ball-room, being anxious at all costs to separate Brenda from Desborough.

"Not I," said Sir Eric, promptly, as he suddenly recalled the scene in the garden. He was not even sure in his own mind that he had acted creditably in that transaction, and he knew what his ward must be thinking of him.

Mrs. Wyndham saw that his face clouded over ominously, so wisely did not press the point; but she longed for a safe corner in the landau, where she might have thought out her ruined hopes in peace.

Lady Manville, with her head out of the window of the carriage, was begging and praying every man who came near to fetch Miss Farquhar. The Miss McIntoshes were laughing and abutting their shoulders over the suggestive fact that Mr. Desborough was missing as well as their host's cousin, when Sir Eric appeared on the scene with his two companions.

One look in his face made them think something was "up," and they exchanged scared glances with each other. With Mrs. Wyndham on his arm he was walking down the drive to the brougham, which could not come up to the front-door because of the carriages in front, when the Viscount, after exchanging a few words with Lady Manville, ran after him.

"Farquhar, just stop a moment! The old lady's in a terrible wax, and says you mustn't on any account go off without finding Miss Farquhar."

Sir Eric scowled and muttered an oath. Then he said, savagely,—

"She's only having a cursed flirtation somewhere! Tell my aunt that she's her chaperon, and not I!"

So saying he put Mrs. Wyndham into the brougham, took his place beside her, and slammed the door.

"Home!" he called out to the footman, and the carriage moving out of the rank got quickly ahead.

"Well I'm blowed!" ejaculated Lord Pinkerton. "Believe I've got to hunt up the girl myself, and Nature never intended me for this sort of work!"

He went slowly into the spacious hall where there were several people still left who had

been enjoying a final supper, but nowhere could he see Miss Farquhar.

He strolled through one reception-room after another, stood for a few minutes at the door of the ball-room, where two or three couples were enjoying the pleasures of a last waltz; but Desborough had apparently lost his chance, for he was nowhere to be seen.

The Viscount was sorely puzzled. He stepped out of the window and looked round over the vast expanse of garden, where the lights were beginning to die out. A few men were smoking near the house.

He went up to one of them and asked if he thought that any ladies were walking about the garden. No, he was sure they had all gone in, for he had been acting policeman for Lord Thornton, who had asked him to have a look round the grounds.

"I hope nobody has given you the slip?" looking up into his face with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

"Nothing to do with me," crossly, "only I don't want to stay here all night," and in a very bad temper he sauntered back to the hall.

"Such very bad form," he grumbled, "to wait till they shut the doors upon us!"

Just then a door on the left hand opened quietly, and Brenda Farquhar came out, followed by her host and Mr. Desborough.

He darted up to them.

"Miss Farquhar, I've been looking for you everywhere!"

She turned a pair of grave eyes upon him and a weary face.

"I hope I haven't kept you waiting."

"Oh, not at all! Only the old lady's cursing and swearing—I mean—she's in no end of a fuss, and the others have been packed up for the last half-hour."

"I'm so sorry," hurrying forward. "You will let us know, Lord Thornton?" casting an entreating glance at him over her shoulder.

"Yes, to be sure. My wife shall send you a line, or one of us will ride over."

Desborough ran up with her white wrap, and put it over her shoulders without a word. Lord Thornton handed her into the landau, the other two men got into the break, and with many sighs of relief the whole party started homewards.

Desborough was obliged to explain that Cyril Farquhar had met with an accident, in order to shield himself from the fire of chaff which Miss Joe began once again to indulge him with.

"An accident, dear me, how odd! What sort of accident? Do tell us all about it!" eagerly.

"I know nothing, except that I found him lying on the path!"

"Dead drunk? How disgusting!" with wide open eyes.

"No more drunk than you are," shortly.

"Then somebody knocked him down! How exciting! Let me think. It was Sir Eric. I bet you five shillings it was Sir Eric. He was making up to Brenda, depend upon it, and our host in his slap dash fashion thought he'd put a stopper on it. You know I'm right!"

"I'm a great deal too sleepy to contradict you!" shutting his eyes.

Nothing daunted, Miss McIntosh went on,—

"Then came Mr. Desborough's opportunity. He dashed in to the rescue—picked up one rival, abused the other, and walked off with the fainting beauty, who took one hour and a half to come round!"

"Write a novel, or your imagination will be too much for you," Paul murmured with a groan.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

"Desborough, one word with you," and Sir Eric opening the study door, stood aside to let him pass in. It was the day after the ball, which seemed to have had a bad effect on everybody's temper. There was a general

disposition to grumble at everybody else, and some people were wise enough to keep their own rooms and plead a headache.

Brenda was among the number, in consequence of which Mr. Desborough looked as forlorn as a dog who has lost his master. He did not attempt to look gratified at his host's sudden wish for a conversation, but contented himself with an interrogatory, "Well?" as soon as the door was shut.

"I just want to know what you meant by your conduct last night?" said the Baronet, sternly, his sternness being strengthened and enlarged by a splitting headache.

"What I meant by it?" drawing himself up and flushing slightly.

"Yes, by Jove! I want a plain answer to a plain question; and I wish you to understand that I will allow no man to play fast and loose with my word!"

"Don't you think that's rather an unnecessary statement?" speaking very slowly.

"I'm sorry to say I don't," looking him straight in the face.

"Considering that Miss Farquhar is what she is, I should say no man in his senses would treat her so!"

"I don't care a straw what other men would do! I see excitement growing under the influence of Desborough's coolness. 'The question is, do you wish to marry my cousin or not? Don't imagine that I want to throw her at your head!'"

"Do I wish!" his face lighting up with a flash of enthusiasm. "Why, it's the only wish on earth worth living for!"

"Ah! I thought I couldn't be mistaken, though Mrs. Wyndham persisted that I was; but women always think they are the only people in the world with eyes in their heads!"

"Mrs. Wyndham said I didn't care for Miss Farquhar?" slowly.

"I ought not to have mentioned her name," hurriedly. "She would never forgive me if she knew it!"

"As for myself, I could bear that calamity with resignation!"

"I'm not so sure of that. But look here, Desborough," his face flushing, and his lips switching uneasily, "I'm awfully fond of the girl, and I'd rather cut off my right hand than give her to you if you wouldn't make her happy!"

"The fact is, you want your house to yourself," feeling such an irresistible wish to show that he was not taken in by the Baronet's creditable sentiments, that, however imprudent the remark might be, he couldn't keep it back.

Sir Eric frowned.

"That is no business of yours, and you've no right to say it! I've given up all my plans to make a home for my cousin, but I don't see why I should go on at it all my life!"

"My dear fellow, don't be angry. Who could blame you for wanting to be married? And what woman on earth would stand having such a beautiful girl as Miss Farquhar always before her husband's eyes?"

"I should hope my wife would trust me!" haughtily.

"She might, but she would be very unwise," dryly.

"Desborough, I can't make you out!" exclaimed Sir Eric, impatiently. "You are just as ill-tempered as if I had refused my consent instead of giving it!"

"Supposing that the Queen, the two Houses of Parliament, the whole force of the police, her mother and her guardians, put their heads together to prevent me from marrying your cousin, I tell you that I would marry her in spite of you all, if I had once had a 'yes' from her own lips!" bringing down his clenched fist with a thump on the table, which made inkstands and candlesticks rattle. "Now you know what sort of man you have to deal with!" looking up into the Baronet's face, his eyes flashing, his nostrils quivering with suppressed excitement.

"And here am I ready to help you!" wondering what "the fellow" meant.

"You can't!" hoarsely, as the brightness faded from his eyes, and his face grew sullen. "Not a soul can do anything for me as long as that fair-haired boy, her own cousin, is always hanging about!"

"Nonsense, man! Pluck up courage. Cyril will marry Maude Allingham, that girl with the pink gown. I know it for a fact; and I bet you a pony Brenda knows it too. Haan't she got a headache this morning? Why, it's as plain as a pike-staff—that's it!" triumphantly.

"That might make a difference," thoughtfully. "But, 'pon my soul, I don't see why it should make her like me!"

"That's all nonsense! Why, Paul, you talk like a love-sick schoolboy! I thought you went in for being a regular lady-killer!" opening his cigar case, and handing it to Desborough.

An expression of scorn—scorn for himself more than for anyone else—crept over Desborough's refined features. All his former amatory successes seemed so detestable when placed in contrast with Brenda's spotless purity.

"Can't you see that, just because of that, she's all the more bound to hate me?" he said, in a low voice.

"No, by Jove, I can't!" with a short laugh. "You must be a muf to think so. There's nothing so prone to tempt a nice girl to matrimony as the idea that she could turn a loose fish into a saint. They are sure to jump at the chance."

"Perhaps you are right!" with a smile. "At any rate, I'll have a try."

"Look here! I wouldn't say this to anyone but you," his face flushing as with a slight sense of shame. "Get her to do something odd—something queer, you know, and you'll manage it. Lady Manville shall turn on the screw, and—the thing's done."

"Miss Farquhar is scarcely likely to give me the chance," his lip curling, his better nature rebelling nobly against the meanness of the proposition, and yet the temptation to win the game at all costs was almost more than he could withstand.

"I will give it you!" Driven on by his mad jealousy, and ready to go any lengths in order to see Cyril robbed of his love, and Mrs. Wyndham safe from Desborough's fatal fascinations. "To-morrow it is proposed that we all go for a moonlight ride. We start in couples at different times. We go where we like, we come back when we choose, supper is at eleven!"

"A charming plan; but Miss Farquhar would as soon think of flying as choosing me for her escort. I'd bet anything she would take Pinkerton as the only married man of the party."

"Pinkerton shall have somebody else, whether he wishes it or not. See what a friend I am willing to be to you!"

"Yes!" said Desborough, with his slow smile; "but what is your motive?"

Sir Eric exclaimed angrily, "Dash it all, Paul! will nothing content you? You are worse than an octopus, you are never satisfied!"

"Perhaps I shall be satisfied to-morrow evening," and he walked slowly towards the door. He turned round when he reached it. "Thanks for all your good offices."

It went against him to own any obligation to the Baronet in the matter; but he could not help knowing that it would be utterly unconvincing to say something of the kind, so the words came out unwillingly. Then, with a little nod, he left the room.

As soon as he was alone Sir Eric flung himself on the sofa. The violent movement made the pain in his head maddening; but he was in that sort of state that he could not do anything quietly.

He lay there trying to tranquillise his mind, but that was impossible. He was really most intensely anxious about the events of the

night before, not having a clear remembrance of anything.

He knew that he had knocked his cousin down; but what led to it, or what followed, seemed to be lost in a fog.

Cyril might have been seriously injured, and he felt that he could not go on much longer without knowing how he really was.

He knew that nothing would make him tell Lord Thornton that it was his own cousin that knocked him down, for Cyril, as a boy, would rather have bitten off his tongue than let it tell tales against a schoolfellow.

And, as he remembered the old days at Elton, when they used to make it a point of honour to back each other up, a poignant feeling of regret came over him that everything was so changed to what it used to be in the past.

The change was principally in himself, as he knew well enough. The natural audacity of a high-spirited boy had developed into the recklessness of an unprincipled man, and every scruple had been cast away in the fierce struggle for what he considered his rights.

He had bartered his peace for an inheritance that he had hated, he had given his love to a woman whom he could never trust. He had estranged his ward by his own extraordinary conduct, he had driven from his side the one man who through good report and bad would have stuck to him with unswerving fidelity like a limpet to a rock!

It did not do to think—thought would drive him out of his senses. Without rising he stretched out his hand and rang the bell.

When the footman appeared he asked him if any message had come from Thornton Hall.

"I believe Miss Farquhar had a letter, sir."

"Tell Miss Farquhar to come to me at once," he said, in his imperious fashion.

After a delay of some minutes the door opened, and Brenda walked in slowly, with her head in the air. She would not look at him, and stopped at some distance from the sofa, as she inquired what he wanted.

He looked her over with his sombre eyes, and even in his irritated mood was capable of admiring the grace of her attitude, as well as the delicate beauty of her grave face.

"I hear that you've news from the Hall. What do the Thorntons say?" leaning on his elbow.

"I daresay you will be disappointed; but you haven't murdered him?" she said, with a scornful flash from under her long lashes. "In spite of your brutality he is almost as well as usual."

"I'd have you take care what you say," he cried, white with rage. "I'm not in a mood to stand the smallest nonsense."

"Nor I," with a toss of her head. "Oh! you can knock me down if you like," as he sprang to his feet. "You are such a perfect gentleman, you would be sure to enjoy it."

"Brenda!" he gasped, almost choking with rage, "you are a fool to excite me. But let me tell you this," his eyes glaring into hers. "Conquer you, I will!"

"Begin by conquering yourself," she said, coldly, though her heart beat fast with excitement. "A man who has no self-control has no power over others."

An oath broke from him, and he seized her shoulder with a fierce grip which was likely to leave its mark for many days. She did not wince or shrink from him, but stood there as still as if she had been fashioned out of marble.

"You little vixen!" he said, angrily. "You hold your head up high enough, but you've nothing to be proud of. You are head over ears in love with a fellow who doesn't care a rap for you. If you've got this control you boast of, see if it keeps you from breaking your heart when he's married to Miss Allingham."

She turned deadly white, but her courage never failed her. She looked straight up into his angry face with grave eyes.

"Poor old Cyril! he deserves a nice wife—"

and I shall make myself very smart for his wedding."

"Do you think you can take me in? You'll be crying your eyes out in the darkest corner you can find."

"You are mistaken," drawing herself up proudly. "Boy and girl, we've always been together, and of course I'm fond of him." Brave as she was her lip trembled, and she lowered her eyes hastily, as the tears rushed into them. "But there is a wide difference—between that—and the other thing."

"The other thing" which you give to Desborough?" watching her closely.

"Exactly. How well you guess!" the scornful curl of her lip contradicting her words. "And now, if you've quite done with me I'll go, as I can't say your manners," drawing her shoulder away from his grasp, "or your conversation are very enjoyable."

He was beginning to relent, his softer feelings were gradually gaining the ascendant, when this remark came like a slap in his face. "Go," he said, roughly, giving her a push, as he took his hand from her shoulder, "Go to Satan. I don't care a rap what happens to you. If you hadn't such a villainous tongue in your head I'd have done my best for you. But if you choose to insult me—you may take the consequences."

"At all events I'll take my leave," and with an air of great cheerfulness she opened the door and went out.

As soon as he was alone Sir Eric paced up and down the long room with rapid strides, trying to work off his rage.

"Confound the girl!" he muttered, savagely. "Why does she always make me more of a demon than I naturally am! If it hadn't been for Lillian I could have loved her desperately. She's splendid in a rage—she takes my breath away. She's a little fool, though, to make me hate her. She might play her game ever so much better, but she's miles too good for any of them. I can't help it, Desborough must be made safe, and the house must be clear for myself and Lillian. Confound my head—it's just as bad as if I had been drunk last night!"

He rested it for a moment on the high mantel-piece to still the throbbing of his temples, and instantly his thoughts went back, against his will, to that terrible time only divided from this morning by a few hours—when that horrid vision had appeared to him.

Was the fearful spectre going to dog his footsteps for ever? It had followed him to Paris, to the South of France; it had haunted his sick-bed and retarded his recovery. And now would it drive him from his home? He shuddered in spite of the warm, soft air coming in at the windows, and his face was ghastly when he raised it.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

It was a damp afternoon, dull, grey, with intermittent showers, which put a stop to all rides and drives, and made lawn-tennis a pleasure to be longed for in vain.

The Miss McIntoshes resigned themselves to fate, and retired to the billiard-room, whence peals of laughter were to be heard at intervals, and violent thumpings with the ends of cues, probably intended to express applause.

There was no doubt that these girls knew how to enjoy themselves, and to make the men with whom they associated uncommonly cheerful. But they fought shy of Lady Manville, who treated them with awe-striking politeness in public, and sighed over their eccentricities in the privacy of her own apartments; and they did not get on with Miss Farquhar as well as they had meant to at the beginning.

They liked her, but they felt intuitively that she thought them loud and slangy, and sometimes when in her company they almost felt as if they were so. Joe McIntosh studied

her with great curiosity, and was longing to help her if she could only find out what she wanted.

But by this time she was fairly puzzled, for all her theories seemed to be knocked on the head by turn. First she thought that Brenda was in love with Sir Eric, and that Mrs. Wyndham was trying to cut her out. Then that Paul Desborough was the object of her affections, and that the widow was playing the same game with him. Finally, when she saw the meeting between Brenda and Cyril at the ball, she became convinced that the latter was the only man she cared for, and now she was told that he was engaged to Lord Allingham's daughter!

Her sharp eyes had discovered that there was some mysterious connection between Mrs. Wyndham and Mr. Desborough, but she was certain that the latter was madly in love with Brenda, and almost ready to sell his soul in order to win her. As he was not in the billiard-room she concluded that they were together; but in this she was mistaken, for Paul had been drawn into a game of baccarat with Sir Eric, Mrs. Wyndham, and several others, whilst Brenda had given every one the slip, and was making the best of her way across the park towards Blythe cottages, cloaked in a mackintosh, and with a good-sized umbrella over her head.

It seemed to her an absolute necessity to get away from the stifling moral atmosphere of The Towers, where gambling and flirtation were going on night and day, and no one seemed to have a higher thought than the amusement of the moment.

She had hoped to find at least a pleasant companion in Lady Manville; but the widow was simply a woman of the world, with no topics of conversation beyond the empty chatter of society gossip.

She had always been a weak, well-dressed doll, with no other purpose in life than to get herself safely married, and in after years to settle her daughters. She had no evil tendencies, but she would have let her nephew take any course he liked rather than make a scene by standing up bravely in the defence of what she thought right.

Brenda she considered a stormy young person, who was always making a fuss about nothing, and so blind to her own interest that she let a man with thirty thousand a-year slip through her fingers, when she had the first chance of catching him.

Brenda could not be said to be perfectly happy as she walked with a light step over the wet grass with an utter disregard of the edge of her skirts; but she was determined not to make herself miserable about any man who was engaged to somebody else.

If it had not been for Maude Allingham she might have considered herself hopelessly in love, but for the sake of her maidenly pride she represented herself as cruelly used, because she was always separated from a cousin whom she liked almost as much as a brother.

This innocent self-deception made it possible for her to be unhappy without feeling lowered in her own estimation, which was a great advantage. She held up her face to inhale the sweet fresh air, and rejoiced at her escape from Paul Desborough for a whole afternoon.

What a rage Eric was in that morning! It seemed as if Mrs. Wyndham had an especially evil influence over him. One comfort if she became Lady Farquhar, there would be no necessity for Brenda to stay any longer at The Towers.

She would be free to go where she liked; but it was a dismal thing to be free and not have any place to go to. Somehow the idea of living in a cottage with Miss Moreland did not seem so charming if Cyril were married to Miss Allingham, and therefore prevented from dropping in.

She sighed as she knocked at Mrs. Kent's door, for life was a puzzle, and the future did not look over bright; but she felt better when talking to little Willie, who had got over his

accident long ago, but still looked weak and delicate.

Mrs. Kent was a care-worn woman, with half-a-dozen children and a drunken husband. The latter's misdoings had always been passed over for the sake of his wife, at Brenda's urgent entreaty; but it was probable that if another lady came to rule at The Towers Mr. Kent would soon be sent about his business, and his children left to starve.

Brenda promised to do all she could for the poor woman, and spoke so kindly and hopefully that Mrs. Kent's face brightened and Willie began to smile.

He was delighted when she sat down by his side, and asked him a heap of questions about the card-board model he was making of a steam engine; and gave him fresh hope for the future, by suggesting that he might soon be earning some money like the rest of his brothers, although he might never be strong enough to work in the fields.

She determined to ask Colonel Westbrook's advice on the subject, as soon as he came back, for he was a man on whom she felt she could rely, although she had seen so little of him.

He had only stayed one night at The Towers on his way to Aldershot, but he went away promising to come back for another visit as soon as he could.

Brenda felt cheered by her efforts to cheer others, and waved her hand gaily to Flossie Whitehead, whose home she passed on her way.

She did not guess that poor Flossie was waiting in vain for one who was not likely to come; and she would have been mightily astonished to hear that the doctor's little daughter had actually expected to see Sir Eric ride up to the door with a proposal for her tiny, insignificant hand!

Flossie looked after Miss Farquhar with envious eyes, because she lived under the same roof with her hero.

She would look upon his handsome face, listen to his delightful voice, sit down at the same table with him, pass the whole long evening in his company.

And the pitiless rain had kept him from the one who was watching for him; it was only the rain which had kept him; he would be sure to come to-morrow!

Brenda passed through Woodman's gate, the same through which Sir Eric had decoyed Flossie for the sake of some blue-bells, and never guessed, as she walked quickly through the wood, of the many meetings that had taken place between the Baronet and the doctor's daughter.

Her generous mind would have been fired with indignation, if she had known how her cousin had gone out of his way to steal that poor child's heart merely for his own amusement.

But she never thought of Flossie in connection with Sir Eric, and only reproached herself for not having been to see her for an unusually long time.

As she came near The Towers she saw Sir Eric leaning against one of the pillars of the colonnade which ran along the eastern side of the house.

In order to avoid him, she made a detour; but he had caught sight of her, and evidently wished to speak to her, for he hurried down the steps, and across the lower lawn to meet her.

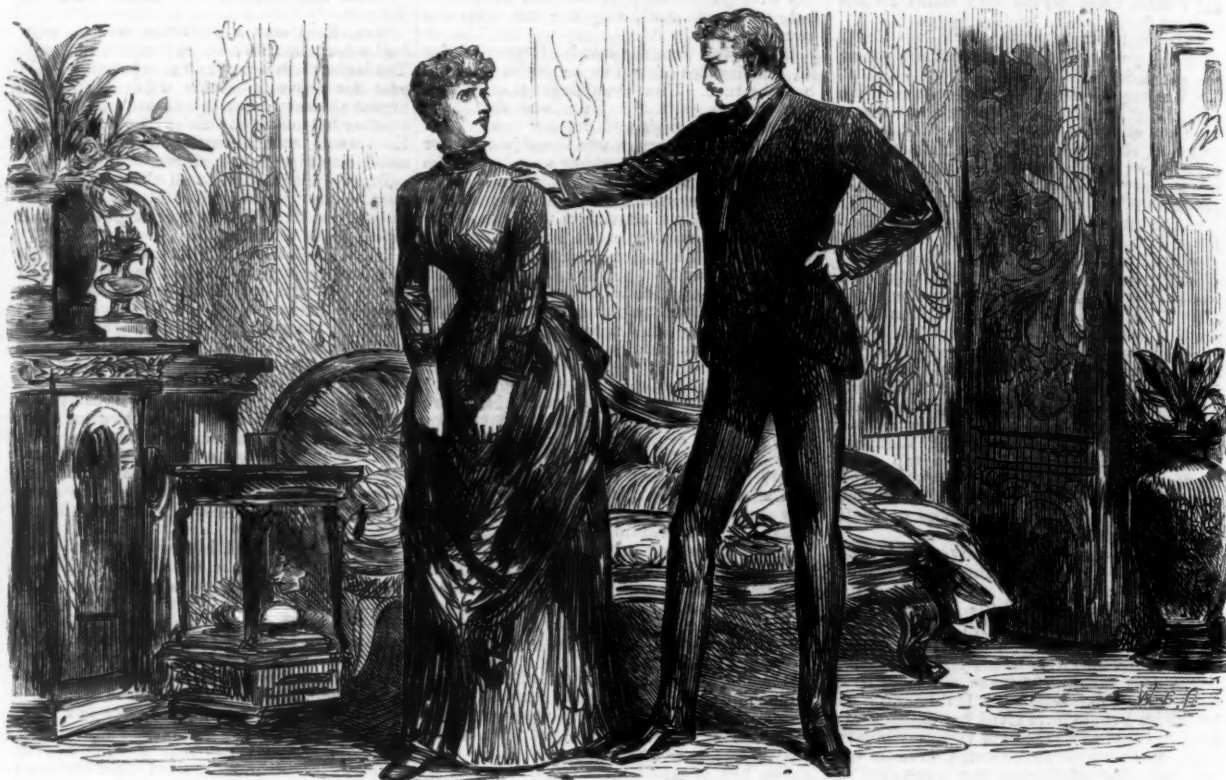
She looked up in surprise, for he had taken care to ignore her ever since their last stormy parting in the study.

At luncheon he had never looked in her direction, or addressed a single remark to her.

She saw at one glance that something had happened, for his cheeks were flushed and his eyes sparkling. He looked ten years younger than he did that morning, as he said, eagerly,—

"Congratulate me, Lillian has promised to be my wife."

"You don't mean it!" she exclaimed, breathlessly, utterly taken aback, though she had often said that she expected it.



[SIR ERIC SEIZED HER SHOULDER WITH A FIERCE GRIP, LIKELY TO LEAVE ITS MARK FOR MANY DAYS.]

"But I do," with a joyous smile, "and I'm the happiest man alive!"

"And is she the happiest woman?" looking at him, speculatively, as if she wished to judge of the effect upon his appearance.

"Of course she is, she ought to be. I know I was rather rough on you this morning," his eyes avoiding hers, "but I think you might squeeze out one kind word, just to wish me joy."

"I do wish you joy, with all my heart," she said, sincerely.

"If you speak the truth, you might do something to promote it."

"If? What on earth can I do?" opening her eyes.

"Say you'll marry Desborough, and there's nothing on earth I won't do for you."

She stepped back in horror.

"I would rather die. But, Eric, what can you mean? What difference can it make to you? Of course I shan't stay here. I'll go away as soon as ever you like."

"Brenda, you must!" very earnestly. "He's a capital fellow; plenty of money; heir to a peerage. His wife would be in the very first flight."

"I think she would," with an amused smile, "for flight would be my first idea."

"Don't be ridiculous!" frowning, for he could not brook the slightest opposition. "What is your objection to him?"

"You won't understand me, I suppose," she said, softly, as she leaned on the stick of her umbrella; "but when I marry—if I ever do—my husband must be a man whom I could trust as well as love, whose thoughts would be of nobler things than flirting, gambling, and racing, who would not abuse me when I vexed him, who would not love me less when I grew plain and elderly, who would help me to be better by the force of his example."

"Marry an angel!" he broke in, with a contemptuous laugh; "there are no such men on earth."

"Then I must be an old maid."

"What utter rubbish! Be a sensible girl, and I'll forgive all the detestable things you said this morning."

"It puzzles me so why you care."

He hesitated, then caught hold of her arm,—

"It will make me feel so safe," in a low voice. "Remember that night she lost her handkerchief. Now do you understand?"

"Yes, I understand," she said slowly; "you are going to marry a woman you cannot trust."

"Brenda!"

"It is the truth; and I'm to be sacrificed to secure your peace of mind. You expect too much from me. Oh, Eric, is it too late? Can't you see that without trust there can be no happiness?" looking up into his face with earnest eyes.

"Without Lillian you mean," with a smile which hid his own uneasiness. "When you get to my age, child, you'll know there's no pleasure without risk—safety palls."

She shook her head.

"I shall never put to sea in an unsound boat."

"Wait till you are in the same boat with Desborough."

"That I shall never be!"

"I swear you shall!" he exclaimed, vehemently. "Now come in and congratulate her. I don't suppose you will refuse me that."

"No, I'll come."

Mrs. Wyndham was seated in an arm-chair in the study. Her face was unusually pale, and she had thrown herself back in the chair, with her hands clasped behind her small yellow head.

Paul Desborough was standing before her with the sternest expression on his face that Brenda had ever seen there.

He did not alter it when Sir Eric came in;

he neither moved nor spoke, but stood there like a figure carved out of a rock.

Brenda took all this in at a glance as she came through the open window. Without taking any notice of him she walked up to Mrs. Wyndham with her mackintosh over her arm, her hat all awry, her damp umbrella in her hand, forming a strong contrast to the widow in her dainty dress of pale blue surah and coffee-lace.

"Eric has told me his news," she said, simply, "and I hope you'll both be very happy."

Mrs. Wyndham got up quickly and kissed Brenda on both cheeks.

"Thank you, dear; that is more than some people do," with an angry glance at Desborough, for which he felt inclined to strangle her. "If you'll only be good to me I'll be your friend through thick and thin."

"Thanks! you are very kind," stooping to kiss the smooth, white forehead. "Make Eric happy."

"And make peace between the two cousins," the widow whispered, with a knowing glance, which brought the brightest of blushes to the girl's cheeks.

"Eh? What was that?" Sir Eric asked quickly.

"A little secret between Brenda and me," taking hold of his arm and resting her head affectionately against his coat.

Brenda made her way to the door, which Paul opened for her.

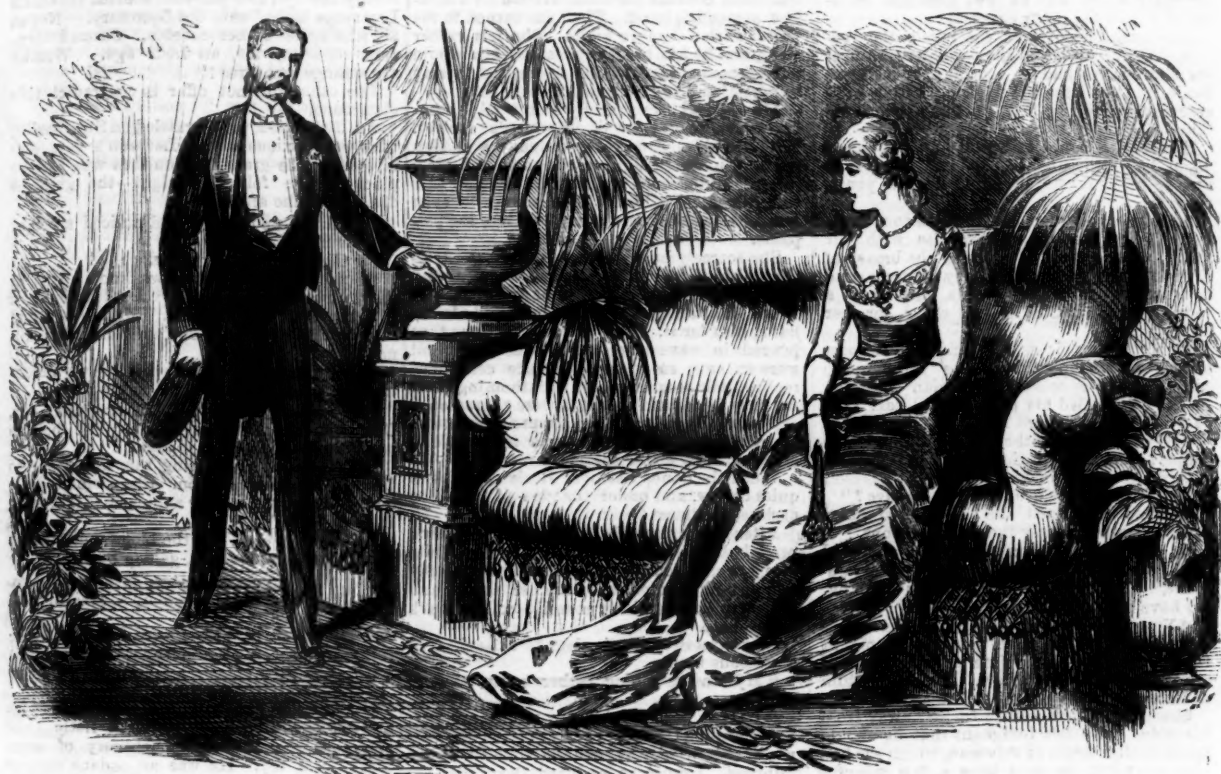
"Do you think they will be happy?" she said, anxiously, when the door was closed behind them.

"Not a chance of it," he answered, promptly; "but I doubt if they will carry it out."

"What is to prevent it?" looking surprised.

"I think I shall," was the grave rejoinder.

(To be continued.)



["VERY FAIR AND VERY BEAUTIFUL," THOUGHT SIR CHARLES CRANSTON.]

NOVELLETTE.]

## LOVE THAT DIES NOT.

—:—

## CHAPTER I.

"That is the man I intend marrying!"

"But, Laura, dear, do you love him?"

"Love him!" and the beautiful speaker's lips curled with scorn; "scarcely that; but I suppose love will follow. What a child you are, Rosie Lestrangle!" half angrily. "I cannot think why those foolish creatures in the convent should put such high flown nonsense into your head!"

Rosie Lestrangle's large, dreamy, violet eyes filled with tears.

"Do not speak so, *ma cousine*!" she said, pleadingly; "the Sisters were all that is good and kind! Ah! if you had only known Sister Ursula, and seen her patience and gentleness, as I did, I am sure you would have loved her!"

The Honourable Laura Chadwick flirted her fan contemptuously.

"For goodness sake don't let anyone hear you talk such rubbish, Rosie! Lord Herbert is coming this way. I will introduce you to him."

Before Rosie could either decline or accept the proposed honour, the subject of their conversation stood before them—a tall, handsome man, with heavy, tawny moustache, and kindly, honest, grey eyes.

This was all Rosie could have told a stranger of his personal appearance; but as she glanced up at him from beneath her long, drooping lashes, she felt a nameless thrill pass through her frame, whilst the hot blood seemed to rush through her veins like liquid fire.

The whole of the ballroom and its occupants seemed enshrouded in mist, and she knew not what was passing around her.

She was aroused by the musical voice of Lord Leveson.

"I fear you are ill, Miss Lestrangle!" he said, concernedly. "Mrs. Montgomery's rooms are always close and stifling."

By a powerful effort of self-control she recovered her composure sufficiently to answer him, feeling angry with herself the while for letting this strange, exciting feeling obtain the mastery, if only for a moment.

"It is nothing, Lord Leveson, I thank you," she said, quietly, forcing herself to look full into his handsome, kindly face. "A little faintness; but it has passed."

She saw her cousin's dark eyes fixed searchingly upon her as she spoke, and this added to her courage.

"I was about to ask you to confer a favour upon me when your sudden pallor wrested the words from my lips. May I ask for the next waltz, Miss Lestrangle?"

She took up her card, and glanced at the names already inscribed upon it.

"I am afraid I am engaged, Lord Leveson." Not a tremor in her voice told of her disappointment.

"At least, you can spare me one?" he asked, earnestly.

She handed him her programme with a calm smile, and, with a feeling of gratification he was surprised at in himself, he inscribed his name amongst those of the noblest of the land.

Laura Chadwick's breast was filled with envious jealousy, but she was too much of a woman of the world not to be able to conceal it.

The band now struck up, and, with a few words of thanks to Rosie, Herbert Leveson turned round, and offered his arm to her cousin.

Laura took it with an air of proprietorship, and glanced triumphantly at the gentle Rosie. The latter heaved a deep sigh.

"Poor fellow!" she murmured. "Little

does he guess the thoughts that are flitting through Laura's brain. She will marry him, I know, because she is so clever and so beautiful; but afterwards, when he finds out that it was not for himself, but for his wealth and position, when he discovers that she was bought by the glitter of an earl's coronet in prospective, what then?"

She shuddered violently, and sinking down upon an amber-satin *fauteuil*, which was screened from the remainder of the room by a cluster of wavy plum-like palms, gave herself up to thought, thinking how she might save this proud and noble man from a fate which, to her, was worse than death.

Very fairylike did she look, with her *petite* figure enveloped in a gown of light, blush-rose satin almost covered with a mass of soft, creamy lace, and her fair face framed in by her bright golden hair.

Very fair and very beautiful! At least, so thought Sir Charles Cranston, who, with an unmistakable air of disappointment, had been wandering through the ballroom, and now, by accident, stumbled upon this sequestered spot with its enchanting occupant.

"Miss Lestrangle, it was scarcely fair or generous of you," he said in a reproachful tone, "to hide yourself in this nook whilst I have been looking everywhere for you."

She turned to him with a gentle smile.

"You can hardly say you have been looking everywhere, for you did not look here, Sir Charles!"

"Fairly reasoned, by Jove! But really, Miss Lestrangle, you have shown remarkably good taste. I had no idea Mrs. Montgomery could boast of such a cosy retreat!"

He made a movement as though he would seat himself by her side; but Miss Lestrangle did not feel in the humour for a  *tête-à-tête*  with the Baronet, although he was a Secretary of State, and, though still young, one of the shining lights of his party. She therefore

promptly arose, and he was perforce compelled to join the other dancers.

The soothing notes of the music the *frou-frou* of the dresses, and the regular rhythm of the sliding feet had a soothing effect upon Rosie, and she was able to listen with a well-assumed interest to her partner's conversation.

Sir Charles could talk well and pleasingly when he liked, and he was now eager to appear in a favourable light to his young partner.

Although this was her first season, Rosie had already become a favourite with the men, and the cause of envy in the breast of many a matron who had a bevy of unmarried daughters. In other words, she was a success, and Sir Charles was eager for her approbation.

At last the music ceased, and the dancers scattered in couples or groups through the rooms of the spacious Belgravian mansion. As Sir Charles led his partner to a seat they passed Laura and Lord Leveson.

"By Jove, don't they make a handsome couple?" cried he, in sincere admiration. "I suppose your cousin will be Lady Leveson before the season is over, Miss Lestrangle?"

Rosie's face flushed, and she felt her heart beating more violently than was its wont.

"I am sure I don't know!" she said quietly, using her fan to screen her embarrassment, which she was fearful of his noticing. "I have not heard!"

"No! I am surprised at that! Leveson's admiration and devotion has been apparent to all of us for some time now, but he was always rather a slow fellow. I remember him at Eton."

She drew herself a little further away from his side. She felt indignant that he should speak so lightly of this man, whom she had spoken to for the first time a few minutes before. Then her mood changed to one of defiance, and she boldly took up the cudgels for the absent one.

"My father said he behaved nobly in Afghanistan. Lord Leveson saved his life when he was wounded at the risk of his own!"

Sir Charles glanced at her quickly, and something like a frown flitted across his brow.

"I have not the least doubt of it, Miss Lestrangle," he said, quickly. "You mistook my meaning. Lord Leveson was chivalrous, and brave to a degree. He saved three of his schoolfellows from drowning when the floods were on. But it is only when danger menaces others that he is quick. I heard your father, the Colonel, say the same thing. He was surprised by a party of a dozen Ghazis or thereabouts. He was alone, but could easily have reached the camp before they got up to him. Instead of that, he stopped short, drew his sword and revolver, and fought the lot. By the time his men came to his encounter half the natives were placed *hors de combat*, and the others were preparing for flight."

"On being asked why he faced such terrible odds, his reply was characteristic. 'It is such a trouble to run in this climate, don't you know?' But, by Jove! Lord Leveson seems to be taking up all our conversation, Miss Lestrangle!"

Rosie was filled with exultation—her hero was a real hero, after all—fearless and brave. But then a little sigh escaped her full red lips. What was he to her? Nothing! Almost a stranger.

She turned to Sir Charles Cranston to make some light reply, when her partner for the next dance claimed her hand.

"And now, Miss Lestrangle, it is my dance, is it not?"

She had been sitting on a couch by the side of Miss Montgomery, the daughter of the hostess, a tall, masculine-looking young lady, with strong horsey proclivities. She looked up as the musical tones sounded in her ears.

Well did she know who the speaker was, and a feeling of pleasure took possession of her. She glanced at her programme, and read

the name Herbert Leveson, written in a careless, straggling hand. Then she turned to the writer with a demure smile. She felt rather tired, and had it been anyone but him would have proposed to sit out the dance; but loyalty to herself and to her cousin forbade it.

Already she began faintly and feebly to understand the danger of this man's society. Why should she have taken such a sudden interest in him? Why was she so excited when introduced to him? and why did she now fear to be alone with him? The answer to even her pure and innocent mind was too, too palpable.

She scarcely heard his murmured words as they whirled round in the mazy dance, and replied by monosyllables. She knew he was trying his utmost to please her, and almost hated him for it. The varying emotions that poured in wave after wave over her mind were so new, so strong, that she could not realise their meaning, and in fathoming their mystery her whole thoughts were engrossed.

Herbert Leveson noticed her pre-occupation, and wondered at it, but he was too gentle to allude to it by either speech or manner.

When the dance was over Rosie retired to a quiet corner, and under the plea of headache declined to dance again.

After some time Laura came up, looking proudly beautiful in her maize satin and white lace gown, which was so suited to her queenly figure, and harmonised with her cream and red complexion and her massive coils of dark brown hair.

"Are you tired, Rosie, dear?" she asked, in a gracious tone.

"My head is aching rather badly, that is all."

"I am so sorry, but these rooms are perfectly stifling! Mamma has ordered the carriage round, and it will be here in a few minutes. I must go and tell Bertie we are leaving, and then I will rejoin you."

Rosie started violently. She knew who "Bertie" was, and by her cousin's manner of speaking she also knew that he had proposed and been accepted.

A dull, heavy pain seemed to strike her heart, and for a moment she felt as though she must choke for want of breath.

But she bravely combated her weakness, and when Laura returned there was no expression of anything but weariness upon her fair, beautiful face.

Full of her triumph, Laura Chadwick never suspected the cause of her fair cousin's prostration.

How could a little chit like that ever be a source of dangerous rivalry to her? Preposterous! Had anybody mooted such an idea she would have laughed in their face.

A motherless girl, who had been dragged up in a convent, to which her stern warrior father had consigned her during his term in India, to be a rival to her, who, as soon as her frocks had become any appreciable length in the skirts, had been allowed to mix with the best set! Bah! people must be blind idiots to think of such a thing!

And now she was self-congratulatory over her own judgment! The girl's hoydenish graces and country looks had been a successful foil to her own superb Juno-like form, dark features, and supercilious aim.

She would be Lady Leveson, the wife of the future Earl of Broadshire, one of the noblest peerages in the land.

She laughed to herself more than once as Lord Herbert led her to the carriage.

Sir Charles Cranston performed the same office for Rosie, but so absorbed was she in her own thoughts that she paid but little attention to his ponderous platitudes, and as he turned round on the broad steps he voted all country girls bores.

## CHAPTER II.

He linked his arm within that of Lord Herbert, and the two re-entered the ballroom together.

"By-the-bye, how pale and wearied that Miss Lestrangle looks," said the Secretary. "Not at all like either of her cousins. Seemed vivacious enough, too, an hour ago. Women are strange creatures!"

The other did not offer to contradict this statement.

"A little briek, too!" rattled on Sir Charles, who was anxious about Leveson's vote and interest in the great division that was to take place on the following night—the greatest division of the session.

He looked up quickly, and noticed a bright sparkle in Leveson's eyes.

Sir Charles gave a chuckle.

"Something more than we know about in that," he said to himself. "Leveson is more interested than I thought. Miss Laura had best look to herself, or she will lose her coronet."

Lord Herbert tugged at his heavy moustache with an amused smile on his face.

"You were not long in finding that out, Cranston," he said laughingly. "I believe you only had one waltz together?"

"So we had, and during the whole of the time she was praising you. She seems to have kept a diary of all your achievements during the campaign."

Leveson laughed, but the blood mounted up to the roots of his curly, golden hair.

Say what you will, flattery is always pleasant, if it be administered by a careful and judicious hand.

"Very kind of her, I am sure; but her father and I were close friends. The chief is a tremendously splendid fellow, although as strict and stern as a Puritan."

Cranston was watching his features with all the curiosity with which a little child examines the internal machinery of some mechanical toy. He was an ardent student of physiognomy, and burned to know if his conclusions were right.

He was not a bosom friend of Lord Leveson, and he feared the future peer might meet him with some unpleasant rebuff.

Nevertheless, curiosity for once in a way prevailed over his usual cautiousness.

"By-the-bye, talking of Miss Lestrangle brings me back to her cousin, the beautiful Miss Laura Chadwick. When are we to congratulate you, or is there no truth in the many rumours one hears?"

Leveson's brow became contracted, although he forced a smile to his lips.

"You must wait until to-morrow, Cranston, then I may be at liberty to tell you something more definite. I must be off now. It is five o'clock, and I am due at Richmond at seven. We are rowing up to Mademoiselle Eulalie's house, near Sanbury, for breakfast."

Sir Charles shook his head rather disapprovingly.

"At the invitation of the Comte de Beauveaux, of course?"

"Of course!" replied Leveson, stiffly; he resented this tone of Cranston's.

"Don't let me offend you, Leveson," said the latter; "but sometimes we learn more than outsiders. The Comte de Beauveaux is useful, but is to be by no means trusted. You will speak in the House to-night?"

"A few words, no doubt. But, believe me, I don't feel at all vexed. The Comte is no particular friend of mine. I simply accompany Lord Arthur."

"Miss Chadwick's brother?"

"Yes!"

With that he bade the Secretary a quiet adieu, and descended to the vestibule.

The Secretary remained buried in thought. He owned he was puzzled.

Rosie was certainly a guest at Lord Arthur's house; but her father was expected in town every day.

Why, then, should Leveson interview Lord Arthur concerning his cousin? No! He could only be interviewing the young and reckless lord about Laura.

The Secretary's reasoning was acute, and by

a short, logical argument with himself he had arrived at something like the truth.

Lord Leveson had become entangled with Laura before he had seen Rosie, and was prepared to honourably sacrifice his feelings to his duty.

"A splendid fellow!" was the Secretary's comment; "but his sense of honour is too high. He would never make a Secretary of State. A Brutus very often plays the part of a fool!"

With this cynical philosophy still running through his mind, he turned to Clara Montgomery, and chaffingly quizzed her about her bad luck at the last Goodwood meeting.

As soon as the carriage of the Chadwicks drew up at their house in Manchester-square, Rosie alighted, and with a few smothered words of excuse to Lady Arthur—a stout, fair blonde, who might easily have been mistaken for something far lower in the social scale than a peeress—she hurried to her room.

Then summoning her maid she bade her take off her ball dress and bring her dressing-gown.

Then the maid loosened her hair, and Rosie, leaning back in her softly-cushioned chair, gave herself up to thought, ever trying to analyse the mysterious agitation which had seized her on her first introduction to Lord Herbert Leveson.

Her reverie led to nothing; for not for a single moment would she allow that she had fallen in love with this handsome, wearied-looking nobleman.

Feeling angry and dissatisfied with herself, she arose, and was about to pass into her bedroom when the door opened, and clad in a loose flowing robe de chambre of wine-coloured satin, the Honourable Laura Chadwick entered.

She clasped her cousin in her arms with affected emotion.

"Congratulate me, my darling Rosie!" she sobbed hysterically. "Lord Leveson has proposed to me, and I—I have accepted."

A feeling closely akin to loathing possessed Rosie, as she remembered the words spoken by Laura in the ballroom.

"I am very pleased if you think you will be happy together!"

"And why not?" answered Laura, sharply.

"There is not the slightest reason why you should not, if you love him and he loves you," said Rosie, simply.

Laura tossed her head disdainfully.

Then, after a pause,—

"He could have married lots of girls. Of course he could almost have had his choice with his wealth and settlements; but most of those eligible were either fair or intolerably ugly. He detests fair girls."

Rosie never made the least sign that she felt the thrust.

"I hope you will both be very, very happy!" she said with a sincere fervency.

"Thank you, dearest. I could not sleep until I had told you about it. No one else knows a word except Ella. I have just broken it to her, and I believe she is quite jealous."

Ella was Lady Arthur, and between her and Laura there was little love lost, although they always professed the most undying affection for each other.

Rosie was awfully shocked, but she held her peace, only resolving that as soon as ever her father, the Colonel, came up to London she would ask him to let her go back with him to their sweet, quiet home in Warwickshire.

### CHAPTER III.

THE next day Lord Herbert dined with the Chadwicks, and at ten o'clock the whole party drove to the House of Commons, the ladies seating themselves in the gallery.

A great and momentous debate was in progress, on the issue of which depended the fate of the Government.

This debate had been carried over three nights, and on this one the division was to be taken.

All was eagerness and anticipation, for some of the greatest orators England possessed were to speak, and amongst these was reckoned Lord Herbert Leveson, who led a party of a score or more of free and independent politicians—men who were credited with placing patriotism before party, and the welfare of their fellow-men before that of themselves.

Rosie was very eager to see "the House" on such a momentous occasion, and also, perhaps, to hear Lord Leveson's speech.

As she took her seat she was greatly disappointed.

The House was not above a quarter full, and those members present were lolling listlessly on the seat, whilst one of the members was uttering a few commonplace in a droning voice.

Then he sat down and another arose—a short, stout man, with a vast expanse of white waistcoat and a harsh, squeaking voice, not unlike the sound made by a gate swinging on rusty hinges.

"And this is the House of Commons, and these are the great legislators upon whose actions this night the world is anxiously gazing!" said Rosie, unable to control her disappointment.

"Ah, Miss LeStrange, don't be too hard upon us," said Sir Charles Cranston, who had just come up to pay his respects and bid them welcome. "It will grow more interesting presently."

"Are you going to speak, then?" asked Lady Chadwick, with a giggle, in her usual bad taste.

Sir Charles flushed. He felt her ladyship had put him in an awkward position, and he by no means thanked her for it. He feared appearing ridiculous before Rosie, although she was but a country girl.

"I may do so, Lady Chadwick," he said, in his usual snave tone; "but if I do it will only be to keep the ball rolling until Leveson is ready. Look now, Miss LeStrange!"

Rosie did look, and was astonished at the transformation that was taking place in the appearance of the magnificent chamber.

Members were rushing in by threes and fours, looking tremendously excited as they took their seats. Those who had hitherto been so sleepy and apathetic were sitting bolt upright and craning their necks forward to catch a glimpse of the front bench below the gangway on the ministerial side of the House.

Her heart gave a bound as she saw Leveson and Cranston enter arm-in-arm, whilst an excited cheer broke from both sides, for they each hoped that Leveson would take their view, and give them their victory.

Cranston looked grave as he took his seat near to the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and whispered a few words in that gentleman's ear.

The galleries were now crowded with men in every variety of dress and uniform—dressed to do honour to the occasion—and with women whose diamonds glittered and flashed with every movement of their heads, arms, or bodies.

It was a grand and absorbing sight, and everybody seemed to feel and share in the excitement.

The flow of members never ceased, and every obtainable seat was occupied, whilst the little man with the cracked voice poured forth his wild and sweeping condemnations of the ministry.

Then he sat down, and after a faint cheer there fell upon the House a profound silence, amidst which Sir Charles Cranston, in a few well-chosen phrases, advocated the measure of the ministry. He did not speak above ten minutes, but what he did say was lucid and to the point.

When he sat down a loud cheer broke forth from his side of the House; but still the look of anxiety never disappeared from the faces

of the members of the Cabinet, or from those of the chiefs of the Opposition.

All knew their fate depended upon one man only, and that man was Lord Herbert Leveson.

Three or four members seated on the Opposition benches arose eager to reply to Sir Charles, but as Leveson had also risen, there were loud cries of his name.

Then a mighty and tremendous cheer broke forth, such as was only a rare occurrence in that historical chamber, and Leveson began to speak.

Rosie craned forward until her cheek touched the grille, her lips parted and her cheeks flushed with intense excitement, and once more was she doomed to disappointment.

The whole House was hushed, but the commencement of Leveson's speech did not seem to warrant the rapt attention accorded it.

His sentences were loosely strung together, and his words passed his lips with a slow, halting deliberation that was almost painful to listen to. Then he slowly drew his notes out of his breast-pocket, and arranged them carefully before him. Still the House was in expectancy. He never raised his voice except to emphasise some false statement made by the opponents of the measure, or some crude argument in its favour made by its supporters.

So far he had done nothing remarkable; and Rosie, who did not understand the vast meaning of the change sought to be wrought in the welfare of the people, was fast losing all interest in the dry, technical details as expounded by Lord Herbert.

The latter's cheek suddenly flushed, his eyes brightened with an enthusiastic fire, and pushing aside his notes, he raised his voice and spoke with a clear and resounding intonation that took the whole assembly by storm.

"After all, what was meant by the measure? The elevation of mankind, the emancipation of a large portion of their fellow-creatures. This measure was intended to be the keystone in the arch of English liberty, the first stones of which had been built up by Alfred and Edward the Confessor. Would they refuse to let this keystone be placed in its position? Dare they do so, and yet profess love for their fellow-men? He said emphatically no! The stone might be rough, but it must be their task to polish it and make it beautiful, but not to discard it. Once place it in the centre of the arch, and it would form a pedestal on which might be placed a statue of liberty with a torch in her hand, the light of which would penetrate to the darkest corners of the earth."

Then he sat down amidst vociferous cheers from the Ministerial benches.

The safety of the measure was assured. The Government was saved.

The ex-Prime Minister, leader of the Opposition, made a remarkably clear speech, but he could not banish the impression made by Lord Herbert Leveson.

Then the division was taken, and the Government was triumphant.

Rosie had listened intently to the impassioned oratory of Leveson, and her previous feeling had become intensified when she saw how he had triumphed; she was as one who had drunk strong drink. She was perfectly intoxicated with his success; and when, calm and unimpressible as ever, he pressed her hand, she could not suppress the words that rose to her lips,—

"Lord Leveson, I am so glad! so very glad! What a brave and noble man you are!"

He smiled faintly, and hastened away.

Had that speech not been delivered, he might, in the not distant future, have been Prime Minister himself; but he never for a moment regretted the loss; he relinquished the golden prize without a pang for his sense of duty. But it was the other prize—the fair girl whose admiration for him he could not fail to perceive—that he regretted being lost; this guardian also, his duty had demanded of

him, and he had given it up, but not so easily or so willingly as the other.

A few days later the engagement was publicly circulated, and the Chadwicks left town for Highcourt.

Rosie, with her father, retired to their little nest in Warwick, and in the cosy, old-fashioned rooms of the "Hermitage" she tried to forget Herbert Leveson.

This was no easy task. She was ever picturing him to herself—at one time on the battle-field, boldly defying a horde of howling Ghazis; at another, winning a nation's gratitude by his fervent and patriotic eloquence.

The Colonel, busily engaged in writing a heavy and ponderous book that was to completely revolutionise the tactics of modern warfare, never noticed her pre-occupation.

And so the days wore on. And as the green of the woods and plantation became gradually harmonious, symphonies in brown, olive, and yellow, she grew paler and thinner, and her beauty became etherealised and saintlike—a Marguerite without a Faust, a Hero without a Leander.

She moved about the house with the same airy grace as formerly; but there was a listlessness in her step, and an absence of the usual merry smile on her lips, that would have been noticed by anyone less preoccupied than the ardent soldier.

One morning, she was seated in the breakfast-room, gazing absently out across the lawn towards a fir-tree plantation, in which the rooks were making a greater din than usual.

Very delicate and childlike did she look in her morning robe of pale blue cashmere, with its close-fitting band of the fur of the silver fox, the wide sleeves, edged with the same fur, falling back and disclosing her white superbly rounded arms. But there was a sad pensive expression in the liquid depths of her large, lustrous, violet eyes, which would have told an ordinary onlooker that her thoughts were far, far away from the scene stretched before her.

She was aroused from her reverie by the entrance of her father.

"Rosie, my child," he said, with gentle inflexion in his voice, "I have invited a few visitors for some shooting. They will be here next Monday. I know you will make them welcome and comfortable."

"Of course I will, papa. Who are they?"

"Well, let me see, there are the Chadwicks, Lord Arthur, his wife and Laura, Captain Gascoigne, Cranston, and Lord Herbert Leveson."

"Lord Leveson!" she repeated slowly, the blood suffusing her face and neck.

"Of course! We could not ask the Chadwicks without him."

"Of course not," she said, absently.

Then she went up to her father, threw her arms around his neck, and, laying her fairy-like head upon his broad chest, burst into a flood of tears.

The Colonel was distracted. Stern disciplinarian and martinet as he was, he was as tender-hearted as a child.

"My love! my darling! What is it?" he cried, anxiously. "Are you ill or in trouble? I have been so occupied I have not had time to notice," he continued, in an apologetic tone. "But really, you look paler and thinner than usual. What is it, my pet?"

"Nothing, nothing! I think I have been rather too lazy lately, and so got out of sorts. It is nothing, papa, believe me, it is nothing. A good sharp walk will make me all right."

With that she hastily left the room, and in future, whenever she was in her father's presence, succeeded in appearing cheerful and gay.

#### CHAPTER IV.

THE Tuesday following Rosie took a longer walk than usual, for it was the day on which the guests were to arrive, and she was schooling herself to meet them without showing any of her embarrassment.

So absorbed was she that she had walked several miles before she noticed whither she was going.

Upon arousing herself she found that she was five or six miles from the Hermitage, and in the most lonely and desolate part of the high road.

As she looked up she shuddered. On her left was a dark, dismal wood, which grew on the side of a steep slope, whilst on the right was a still, dark mere.

It was an uncanny spot, and near where several murders of the most atrocious description had been perpetrated.

She turned quickly round to retrieve her steps and found herself confronted by two villanous-looking tramps.

Her heart beat wildly and she stood perfectly still, quite uncertain what course to pursue.

There was not another living being in sight, and she knew the nearest habitation was at least half a mile distant.

Under these circumstances she determined to face the men boldly, and, carrying out this resolution, attempted to pass them. The men, however, barred her way determinedly.

"Assist two poor workin' men, miss, as 'asn't eaten a crust o' bread for three days," said one, with a professional whine.

Thinking to conciliate them she drew out her purse and tendered him a shilling. The other gave a low ominous growl.

"Tain't half enuff; gi' us yer purse, you can get more, we can't. Ye're no better'n us; ye're on'y flesh and blood, though yer has got a purty painted face. Gi' us it all, I tell yer!"

Rosie drew herself proudly up; at that moment she felt every inch a soldier's daughter.

"How dare you be so insolent?" she exclaimed. "You shall get nothing more, nothing whatever. Let me pass or it will be worse for both of you!"

The wretches laughed in her face.

"Ye'll gi' us those 'er bracelets, and that chain, and yer watch, and hennything helse yer 'as wallyble now!" said the man with a ferocious oath, as he seized her roughly by the wrist and grabbed her purse.

"Help! Help! Help!" shrieked Rosie, now in the utmost fear.

"Put yer hand o'er her trap, Bill, an' just gi' her a knock on the 'ed if she gi's any more jaw."

Rosie struggled violently, and the second ruffian aimed a ferocious blow at her face. It missed its mark, but hit her on the ear, and she fell violently to the ground.

At that moment the crashing of twigs was heard, and a tall, gallant figure sprang into the road. There was a quick succession of heavy blows, a few muttered oaths, and one of the miscreants lay stretched upon the ground, his eyes closed, and his face besmeared with blood, whilst the other ran down the road at the top of his speed.

As she slowly opened her eyes, Rosie saw Lord Herbert leaning over her. A vivid flush mantled her brow as he assisted her to rise.

"I trust you are not much hurt, Miss Lestrangle?" he said, tenderly.

"No, not at all. The merest trifle."

But as she spoke a deathlike pallor spread over her face. She recoiled, and would have fallen had not Herbert caught her in his arms. As he held her soft, clinging form against his broad chest, and glanced down at her pale, beautiful face, a strange longing to possess this fair creature as his own seized him.

For a moment Laura, with all her queenly grace, was forgotten, and he felt that in his arms lay his life's happiness. He stooped down until his moustache brushed her placid brow, and his breath stirred the tiny little ringlets on her temple.

Then he paused. His high sense of honour came to his aid. No; if it cost him his life or more this pure and innocent creature should not know other than honour and respect from him.

Rosie slowly opened her eyes, and her gaze met his. In that one long, rapturous glance the secret of both was disclosed. They knew that each loved the other passionately, fondly, devotedly, and yet that there was a barrier between them which neither could overleap—a gulf that could not be bridged over. Honour—a priceless jewel to both—made their secret love a heavy and wearisome load.

She gently averted her head from his ardent gaze, and disengaged herself from his strong embrace. A violent shudder agitated her frame. Then she impulsively held out her small neatly-gloved hand.

"Lord Leveson," she said, gently, although every note trembled with agitation, "I can never forget this day. How nobly you acted!"

He took her hand in one of his, and laid the other upon the top of it. His lips parted, but no sound came from them. A thick lump in his throat seemed to be about to choke him. With a woman's tact, Rosie came to the rescue. To see this strong man's distress was terrible to her.

"What are we to do about this poor man?" she asked. "You will not hand him over to the police? Distress drove him, perhaps, to act as he did."

Her sweet forgiveness of the one who would have taken her life—intensified Herbert's admiration for her.

She cast a look of pity upon the poor wretched tramp, who had assumed a half-sitting posture, and was casting rueful glances at the handsome pair, as he wiped his face with a tattered rag of a handkerchief.

"You do hit 'ard cap'n!" he said, "but it serves me right. Howsomever, I s'pose it'll be ten years for me."

He gave a weary groan and hung down his head.

The man had not tasted anything but a hard crust, squeezed from tight-fisted charity, for a week or more.

"Tell him he shall be free," said Rosie, eagerly. "Do not be hard on him, for my sake."

"For your sake," with a weary sigh, "I would do anything almost."

The last word came out with a gasping, choking sob, as though it was tearing out his very heartstrings to utter it.

Stooping over the man he placed a sovereign in his hand, accompanied by a card.

"If you want to be an honest man once again, go to that address in London; two days hence I will be there," he whispered.

The man was too much taken aback to reply. He gazed at the card, then at the coin, and then at the speaker, in dumbfounded amazement; then he looked towards Rosie, and all was explained.

At that very moment he could have fallen at her feet and worshipped her. Rosie was his salvation. Bill Symes was from that very moment a changed man.

Never for one moment could he cease to recollect the sweet, pure being who had saved him from ignominy and despair.

#### CHAPTER V.

COLONEL LESTRANGE was more than astonished at his daughter's absence. The hours slipped away, and she was not there to receive the guests, who might be expected at any moment.

Stern disciplinarian as he was, he could not understand her strange neglect of duty. That his daughter should forget herself so far was beyond his comprehension.

Then another idea seized him, and caused his heart to almost cease beating. What if something had happened to her!

He paced feverishly up and down the room in a frenzy of despair, and was about to send all the servants out in search of her, when the noise of wheels was heard, then came loud laughing and talking in the hall, and he knew his guests had arrived.

He was beside himself with mortification and chagrin at his daughter's absence, but met his guests with a cheerful, easy grace, that effectually reversed his inner feelings.

Laura and Lady Arthur were the first to greet him; Laura with a proud air of unruffled grace, her sister-in-law with affectionate gush. Then came Lord Arthur and Captain Gascoigne looking rather *blanc* in the ruddy light of the autumn afternoon.

Sir Charles Cranston brought up the rear, glancing around with an air of easy nonchalance, as he divested himself of his heavy furred cloak.

"But where is my old comrade, Leveson?" asked the Colonel, in some surprise.

"The very question I was going to put about Rosie," said Lady Arthur, with a laugh which, although it exhibited to view two rows of dazzling white teeth, distended her mouth to an immoderate width.

Laura looked almost as annoyed as her host, whose brow darkened at what he deemed an ill-natured remark.

"Bertie said he knew a short cut, uncle, and I preferred to walk. He is certain to be here presently."

The Colonel looked gratefully towards her, but still he knew not his way out of the dilemma. What was he to do with the lady guests? He could scarcely hand them over *holus bolus* to the housekeeper.

"Rosie has behaved very badly, I am afraid," he said at last, plunging in *medias res*. "She went out into the plantation three or four hours ago and has not returned. Perhaps she has gone to meet you?"

"And met Lord Herbert instead!" whispered Lord Arthur in his wife's ear, with a grin.

The latter giggled out aloud.

Colonel LeStrange eyed her sternly.

"Your ladyship appears amused," he said stiffly. "I am glad to see that an old man's company is not too tiresome."

"Not at all, you dear old nunkey," said Lady Arthur, throwing her fat, rounded arms round his neck, and pressing her carmined cheek against his.

Colonel LeStrange hated to be called by such pet names as "nunkey," but this was nothing to Ella. She trampled upon people's feelings with as little compunction as she would on the pattern of the carpet.

A strange restraint fell upon the group, and stern silence reigned supreme as they munched their biscuits and sipped their sherry.

Cranston tried to enter upon a political discussion with the Colonel, but totally failed, the latter only answering in monosyllables.

Then Gascoigne asked him what he thought of the winner of the St. Leger.

"The best horse in training at the time without a doubt."

Gascoigne collapsed.

There was no arguing with an old fogey like this.

"Bad as the army and navy" he whispered in Lord Arthur's ear.

The latter gave a loud guffaw.

"You're three ranks below him, but the old fellow is as rich as Croesus, and I want a couple of thou. badly."

Gascoigne nodded.

Just then Ella uttered a little shout of merriment and held up both her hands.

"Well, I declare! Nunkey! Look here; both our lost sheep together. What's that rhyme, something about the tails coming home and leaving the sheep in the fold of the good shepherd? Very peculiar, is it not, to think that dirty, mud-be-dragged sheep are pretty? For myself—"

Here her lord and master gave her a vigorous pinch on the arm.

"Ella, what are you thinking of?" he said.

"If you go on at this rate he'll never do it."

"Pawny my jewels, then," retorted Lady Arthur. "I'd just as lief have paste, and nobody knows the difference. Don't worry!"

Lord Arthur was the very last one in the

world to worry. Since his majority he had been "going the pace," and, like many more, he intended to die game. Nobody should ever see him disport the white feather!

"All right, Ella, only don't ruffle the old boy's feathers too much. I shouldn't like to vex him."

Whilst they were engaged in this discussion the rest of the party, including Laura, were gazing down the long, straight avenue, up which Lord Leveson and Rosie were coming, the latter's garments dust-stained and splashed with mud.

All were in astonishment. By Rosie's pale face they knew that something serious had happened.

"Quite a Sir Galahad, your fiancé, my dear Laura," whispered Lady Arthur.

Laura drew herself up with dignity.

"You forget, Ella," she said, "that Rosie is your relative as well as mine."

"Only by marriage, dear."

The whole party rushed out on the terrace to meet the "stray sheep," as Lady Ella persisted in calling them.

After a few words of quiet welcome Rosie retired, and then Lord Herbert told the story of the afternoon's adventure, Laura keeping her eyes fixed and steady upon his face as he spoke.

The Colonel listened intently, the fiery flash of his eyes showing that the spirit of the old soldier was in nowise subdued.

"And you gave the fellow in charge?" he asked, as Lord Herbert paused.

For the first time Laura saw his face change colour.

"Well, sir, no, I did not."

"What?"

"At Miss LeStrange's earnest entreaty I let him go. She said she believed he had been driven to the crime by starvation, and I believed the same myself."

The veins on the Colonel's forehead stood out in strong relief, whilst his face turned purple with rage.

For a moment it seemed as though there would be an explosion. At last the Colonel's sense of hospitality came to his aid.

"You acted upon your own discretion, Leveson," he said, coldly, "but I think you did wrong."

"So do I," said Laura, with a freezing look.

"I should have liked the fellow kept, if only as a witness to my preserver's heroism," said Lady Ella, with a loud laugh.

"I quite agree with Leveson," said her spouse. "I dare lay five to two in ponies that the fellow turns out a good—what d'ye call it? I mean a fellow that earns regular wages, and—er—votes straight, don't you know?"

"I'd have shot the beggar!" said Gascoigne. "They're always after the game, and rob a fellow of his rights and his sport."

Leveson looked annoyed, and Sir Charles, who had his own reason for wishing to make the brilliant nobleman his friend, stepped diplomatically into the breach.

"I think you were quite right, Leveson. A man who has once been in serious danger thinks twice before he runs the same risk again. This man, I will be bound, will be steady and sober as any in the future."

Further argument on the point was cut short by the entrance of Rosie, who was clad in a long French grey robe of some soft clinging material that showed every line and undulation of her well rounded form.

At her throat was a small bow of cerise satin, secured by a diamond crescent, and round her wrists she wore a couple of heavy bracelets of dead gold.

Plain though her attire, she wore with it such a pretty air of sweet simplicity that it seemed as though any richer garb would have been misplaced.

As her delicately white taper fingers, with their pink nails, moved deftly about the Dresden china tea-cups, and were reflected with increased brilliancy from the bright silver, Lord Leveson gave a deep sigh. He saw he had made a mistake, and for life.

Rosie wore an air of subdued sadness, which had become habitual to her since her return from London; but which the jealous Laura ascribed to some tender passages which she was certain had taken place between her and Leveson.

"Our marriage must be hastened," she said to herself, as she slowly sipped her tea, whilst admiring the pure water of the gems of the engagement ring given her by Leveson.

The shooting party at the Hermitage could not be called an absolute success. The bag of game each day was splendid, but beyond that the whole affair was wearisome in the extreme.

The Colonel was hospitable enough in his own stately way; but long residence in foreign lands had made him unused to the ordinary usages of society, and he seemed cold and formal.

Rosie was *distract* and nervous from the newly-formed but hopeless passion that agitated her virgin heart.

Laura was jealous and watchful, and the men were thoroughly wearied of the rude jokes and innuendos of Lady Arthur Chadwick.

The latter would have liked to accompany the sportsmen each day; but so far the others had resisted her fancy.

At last, one fine mild October morning she had her way.

A rendezvous was appointed, and the servants ordered to spread the luncheon on a grassy slope at the side of a small stream—a tiny tributary of the Avon—which flowed through the estate.

"This is what I call jolly!" said Lady Arthur, as she rushed into the dining-room in a tweed costume of most striking pattern, a hard felt hat surmounted with a couple of gulls' wings on her fair, fluffy hair. "Why should men have all the sport, I should like to know. *Vive les Amazons!*"

Rosie and Laura, both clad in closely-fitting dark green cloth costumes, with *togues* of the same-coloured velvet, smiled at her enthusiasm.

"You should have been a man, Ella!" said Laura, in her usual cool tones.

Lady Arthur laughed loudly at the questionable compliment.

"Don't I wish I was!" she said, passing her fingers through her fluffy curls. "All you girls would be madly in love with me."

Laura laughed again; but Rosie busied herself in drawing on her tan *sudes* that her guest might not notice the disgust which she was certain must be apparent in her face.

"Shall we start?" she asked quietly.

"I have been waiting this half-hour," said Ella, viciously slapping the skirts of her gown with the short, gold-headed cane she carried in her hand.

The three then started for the rivalet, chatting gaily as they went along.

When they reached the slope they found the servants busily engaged in unpacking the hampers, but there was no sign of the sportsmen.

"I knew we should be too early, Ella," said her sister-in-law. "You are always so impetuous. We are half-an-hour before our time."

"Hark!" said Ella, "I can hear shots. They must be over in that gorse!"

"They are not; they are in the coppice," said Laura. "I heard the shot distinctly."

"I am certain they are in the gorse. I know the sound of a shot too well to be deceived. What do you say, Rosie?"

"I did not hear it distinctly enough to be certain; but I thought the sound came from the plantation."

"Well, I tell you what we'll do," said Lady Chadwick, who, in addition to her other accomplishments, possessed a perfect knowledge of the slang terms and parlance of the betting-ring. "We'll have a sweepstake!"

"A what?" cried Laura, her lips curling.

"A sweepstake, my dear," said Lady Chadwick, good-humouredly. "You say they

are in the coppice; I say the gorse, and Miss Lestrangle says the plantation."

"I said I thought—"

"Just the same, my child. We each back our opinion for a sovereign, and whoever finds them takes the three. Let us put them down in this hollow. Williams will see they are all right. Come on, what are you afraid of?"

After some little persuasion on the part of her ladyship they agreed, Rosie because the others were her guests, Laura because she thought she might degrade Rosie in the eyes of Lord Herbert, by telling him this gambling was her proposal, and Lady Arthur because she delighted in anything that gave a little unnatural excitement. The money was thrown down in the hollow, and the three parted.

Laura set off at a brisk walk for the coppice, Lady Arthur, in spite of her skirts, ran towards the gorse, while Rosie, feeling merrier than she had done for some time—the effects of the bright sunshine and the brisk walk from the Hermitage—stepped blithely along the narrow path that led by the side of the winding stream, which at last lost itself in the plantation.

As she went along she was certain she heard several shots, and she increased her pace, laughing merrily. Gambling is contagious, and certainly the contagion seemed to have seized her.

"I shall win. My very first bet, and I shall win. I can hear them talking!" she cried, excitedly. So, gathering her draperies closely round her, she dashed into the plantation.

Presently she came to a steep path that led down into a little grassy hollow, on the other side of which was a thick heavy undergrowth of ferns, above which rose the slender stems of young saplings.

Amidst these ferns she could hear the words of talking, mingled with hoarse laughter, whilst down in the hollow was young Lord Herbert and the Colonel.

She called out to them as she prepared to descend the steep path, the winding of which would shortly conceal her from their view.

They turned, and then, with a few words to the Colonel, Lord Herbert, gun in hand, bounded up the slope.

"My dear Miss Lestrangle, this is a surprise, and a pleasant one. We did not expect you for another half-hour, at least."

She laughed merrily, all her former gay spirits seemed to have returned on this eventful day.

"You did not think, then, we were such good walkers?" she said.

He looked at her with fond sadness. She seemed prettier than ever in her dark, close-fitting gown, and he felt that he would have willingly given away nine-tenths of his life to have her with him always for the remaining tenth.

He looked so longingly and ardently at her that, to hide her embarrassment, she turned aside her face.

At that moment a small covey arose almost from beneath their feet, and she caught the gleam of two barrels from out the ferns of the opposite slope pointed directly at Lord Herbert. Quick as thought, she sprang between him and them.

There was a sharp double report, she felt a stinging pain in her shoulder, and then fell headlong to the earth.

Everything had happened so quickly that it was not until he saw her lying at his feet, her gown stained with her crimson blood, that Lord Herbert realised the noble self-devotion of this gentle maiden.

He knelt down and tried to staunch the flow of blood from her shoulder with his handkerchief.

"Oh, Heaven! she has sacrificed herself for me," he cried, his face quivering with agony.

#### CHAPTER VI.

"Do you think he will recover, doctor? Tell me the truth. To know the worst is even better than this suspense."

The speaker was Rosie Lestrangle, who, clad in a loose robe of pale blue and white satin, reclined on a luxurious couch in her dressing-room.

She looked very pale and careworn, and her lips trembled as she raised her large round eyes pleadingly to the doctor's face. Her left arm was in a sling, and a violent spasm of pain shook her slender frame as she turned partly round in her eagerness.

Dr. Ferrier looked at her with kindly gravity and a reproving shake of the head.

"What did I tell you, young lady? If you persist in exciting yourself and moving about so restlessly your bandages will become disarranged and the consequences may be serious—very serious."

"But my father, what of him? Do tell me, doctor, I beg of you."

"Well, my dear, the shock to his nerves has been great, very great indeed, and I can give you no positive assurance that he will recover. His constitution has suffered woefully from the foreign climate."

Rosie groaned and covered her face with her disengaged hand.

"He is dying and I killed him! My poor, dear, kind-hearted father!"

Dr. Ferrier remained by her side for nearly an hour striving to comfort her; but the only word that would have conveyed comfort to her he could not utter.

He knew from the very moment that he was called in to attend father and daughter, three weeks before, that the Colonel's life was sped.

On hearing the cries of Lord Herbert, Colonel Lestrangle had rushed up the rugged slope, and when he saw his daughter lying, as he believed, lifeless at his feet, he gave one short gasp, and fell down stricken with paralysis.

Where he fell the turf was thin and wet and slippery, and he rolled down to the bottom of the dell.

Since that time he had neither spoken nor opened his eyes, and it was only by listening to his faint breathing that the doctor could tell for a certainty he lived.

Whilst Rosie was in a critical condition, Dr. Ferrier had kept back from her the peril in which her father stood, but now that she was approaching convalescence he felt no longer justified in doing so.

Leveson's state of mind may be easily imagined. To a sensitive nature like his the catastrophe that had befallen the Lestrangles was terrible. He accused himself of being the murderer of both father and daughter until he heard Rosie was certain to recover but even then the agony he suffered was beyond description.

His friends said his sensitiveness had generated into morbidness, and shook their heads gravely as they reminded one another that the family of the Levesons was not entirely free of hereditary insanity. A remote ancestor, the present Earl of Broadshire's great great-grandmother, had been of most eccentric habits.

Of course, the shooting-party at the Hermitage was entirely broken up, neither Gascoigne nor Lord Arthur Chadwick being exactly the most suitable guests in a house of sickness.

Laura had offered, in her cold, icy manner, to remain, but the offer was made with such ill-grace that Rosie could not bring herself to accept it.

And so she was alone in the lonely, empty house with her dying father, and unable even to go to his bedside to soothe his dying moments.

Letters and telegrams flowed in by shoals, but written sympathies are poor comfort, and as Rosie could not answer them herself, they seemed more cold and comfortless than usual.

Every day either Lord Herbert's valet or squire, whom the nobleman had taken into his own service, came to make inquiries and take back a report.

Rosie understood thoroughly the feeling that actuated his lordship in showing such

pressing solicitude, but now and then she could not refrain from asking herself why he did not come himself.

She knew exactly why he did not and respected him for it, although at times she felt herself longing to behold him once again and to confide in him all her troubles.

And so the autumn days wore on, and at last, as the stately trees of the park were divesting themselves of their gorgeously-coloured foliage and preparing for the stern struggle of winter, Rosie was able to leave her couch and visit the bedside of her father.

She was just in time to see the old soldier open his eyes for the first time.

He looked longingly into her pure, spirituous face and gave a great sigh.

"Heaven help my darling, and bless her!" he murmured. "Kiss me, dear one."

And as her warm lips pressed his cold and bloodless ones his whole frame quivered, and he sank back with a short gasp and a sad smile.

Rosie stood by his side for several minutes before she could believe the truth—that he was dead, and she was an orphan!

Still grasping his hand in hers, she sank back into a chair looking aimlessly before her. Her world was now an entire blank, and she vaguely wondered to herself why she was alive. Everything seemed to be strangely ordered, and she felt puzzled.

When Dr. Ferrier saw the state into which she had fallen he felt that he had acted wrongly in having admitted her to the sick chamber of her father at all. He feared that this tearless, inconsolable grief might end in something worse even than death—that it might end in madness!

And for the first day or two it seemed very probable that such would be the case. Her lonely grief had entirely overwhelmed her, and all her energy and spirit appeared to have entirely deserted her. What had she to live for? Was it not better that she should die and rid the world of a useless encumbrance?

When the many guests arrived at the "Hermitage" to bid their last farewell to all that remained upon earth of one of the bravest and most heroic of the leaders of the British soldiers who have made their name a *sine qua non* for all that is valorous and fearless throughout the world, she went through the usual formalities prescribed by the rigorous, unwritten laws of society with a strange far-away look in her eyes that all noticed but few could describe. Amongst the guests were many old companions-in-arms of the deceased Colonel; but as yet Lord Herbert Leveson had not made his appearance.

She wondered vaguely at his absence, but could scarcely have put her wonderment in words. She missed something, but what that something was she could not have told had she been asked.

On the morning of the funeral, Lord Herbert looking but a shadow of his former self, came to the "Hermitage."

Rosie rose from her seat to meet him; then a flood of tears rushed to her eyes, and she fell down upon a couch and wept and sobbed as though her heart would break. Dr. Ferrier, who was present, murmured a prayer of thankfulness. He knew that those tears, those blessed tears, had redeemed her life; their moisture, he full well knew, would thaw the icy grip of the grim skeleton, and Rosie would live.

Would live for what? Live to be a burden to herself? Had he known and fully realised the secret workings of her heart he would have hesitated ere he had felt so jubilant over the certainty of her recovery. But he did not, and perhaps there was not one in that room who did.

#### CHAPTER VII.

And now the preparations for the marriage of the Honourable Laura Chadwick with

Lord Herbert Leveson were pushed on apace. Rosie Leatrange heard of them, but was so buried in her silent grief that she paid but little attention. She was now one of the most wealthy women in England, and at the same time the most unhappy.

It was two days before the wedding, and she was seated in a large verandah chair on the lawn in front of the "Hermitage." The night was somewhat chilly, and she had enveloped her head and shoulders in a large crimson silk *burnous*, which formed a striking contrast to her dead-white satin gown with its black bows.

With her head leaning upon her small snow-white hand she gazed long and earnestly in the direction of the plantation, thinking—thinking of that meeting with Lord Herbert, which had so tragical an ending.

She was aroused from her reverie by a voice whispering her name softly in her ear.

She gave a violent start, and turned towards the intruder.

It was Herbert Leveson. But how changed, how sadly changed! He was scarcely recognizable. His cheeks were sunken and had lost their colour. His eyes were dull, and his whole frame looked shrunken and shattered.

"You here!" she cried, in dismay. "Why, oh! why have you come?"

He seized her hand in both his, and, pressing his lips to it, with one long, passionate kiss, fell upon his knees at her feet.

"Save me! save me!" he cried, hoarsely, his voice quivering with suppressed passion. "Rosie, do not, I beseech you, condemn me to this life-long misery! Have pity upon me! You are the only one I ever loved. With you for my own I should be the happiest man in England. Without you, life will be an everlasting curse. I have tried hard to combat this, but I cannot—I am vanquished."

She arose to her feet and looked down upon him, with a strange, yearning light in her eyes.

"Lord Leveson," she said, slowly, and with considerable difficulty, "this is madness! You are to be married the day after to-morrow. I know you would not insult me, but had I not faith in your honour, what must I think of this?"

He still retained his grasp of her hand.

"Rosie!" he cried, vehemently, "you know I love you—love you as never woman was loved before. Why then condemn me to marry another? I have been wrong, very wrong, I admit. I made a mistake. At the time I knew not what love meant. You taught me. Yes, Rosie, you were the first and only one whom I ever loved. Why should that phantom, that creation of the imagination—honour—separate us? Why should it condemn me to a life-long misery? Is it not dishonourable for me to wed one I love not?"

She drew her hand gently from him, whilst her bosom rose and fell tumultuously.

"Lord Leveson," she said; "this is unworthy of both you and me. Heaven only knows your love for me cannot exceed that I bear you, but were your honour ever to be sullied, I should despise both you and myself. We have been, perhaps, unfortunate, but there are higher aims in this world than personal happiness and comfort. You, Lord Leveson, have a great and noble career before you. Your countrymen demand your services, and your honour belongs to them as well as yourself. As for me, I shall ever watch your progress to the zenith of fame with a feeling of pride and admiration. Should you ever require assistance that I, in my humble way can render, it is yours. But in return I must ask you, as a just and merciful man, never let us meet again. This present moment of madness will pass, and then you will see the path honour bids you take. Obey its mandate, and I shall be well pleased. Farewell, and may Heaven bless and guide you."

Stooping down, she pressed her pale lips to

his hot, feverish brow, and then turned and fled.

Leveson remained on the ground completely stunned.

Everything seemed to swim around him, and he was thoroughly incapable of motion. The minutes flew by and became hours, but still he remained on the same spot.

His senses seemed to have left him, and the only feeling he had was a sense of burning upon that spot, which had been pressed by Rosie's lips.

The night became colder and a dew descended like small rain.

A violent shudder agitated his stalwart frame, and he arose.

"She is right! She is noble!" he murmured, as he moved away. "My honour must remain unsullied, if only for her sake."

When he stepped in front of the little booking-office of the country station, and called for a first-class ticket to London, the clerk looked at him half inquisitively, half commiseratingly.

"A splendid looking man, but one who has seen a world of trouble," was his comment as he stamped the ticket.

On arriving at St. Pancras station, Leveson hailed a hansom cab and was driven to his chambers in Pall-mall.

On the very threshold he was met by Lord Arthur Chadwick. He would have pushed by the insignificant-looking peer had he not been detained by the latter, who seized him hastily by the arm.

"Leveson, I must speak with you," he said, with an unwonted tremor in his voice.

Leveson turned abruptly round in surprise. For a moment he thought Lord Arthur had been indulging too freely in the cup that cheers and inebriates; but on looking at him more closely he saw that he was mistaken. Chadwick's face was pale and haggard, whilst his eyes seemed almost standing out of his head. Leveson hastily dragged him into his room, and forced him into a chair.

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

Chadwick buried his face in his hands, and rooked himself to and fro. At last he aroused himself, and seized Leveson by the hand.

"Do not blame me. I knew nothing of it. I could never have suspected it," he said, incoherently.

"I blame you for nothing, Chadwick, because I know nothing. What is it, man? For Heaven's sake, speak out!"

"Laura has gone!"

"Gone! Dead?"

"Would to Heaven she was! Worse than that."

Herbert Leveson staggered back as though he had received a cut across the face with a riding-whip. He knew too well the meaning of the words spoken by the other. And this was the woman to whom he was about to give his name—a name which for many centuries had never been stained by dishonour! This was the woman for whom he was about to sacrifice the whole of his future happiness! The blow was terrible!

He glanced at Lord Arthur Chadwick with a stern look of reproach.

"Don't look like that, Leveson. She has disgraced my name as well."

The young lord seemed thoroughly overwhelmed by his humiliated position. Plunging his hand desperately into his breast pocket, he drew out a delicately perfumed note.

"It is for you," he said, hoarsely.

Leveson crushed it up, and was about to consign it unread to the flames, when his arm was arrested by his companion's feverish clutch.

"We know nothing! For Heaven's sake read it, that I may know the worst."

Leveson tore it open, and read as follows:—

"DEAR HERBERT,—I am about to confer upon you a very great favour. I am going to place your wife's future coronet again at your dis-

posal, when no doubt my cousin, Rosie Leatrange, will be only too glad to be the recipient of your favours. I find after all that marriage without love is a very tame affair. I never loved you, but my ambition prompted me to try and win you. I succeeded, but found no pleasure in success, for I knew from the first you loved another. You are now free to make her your wife, as I was married this evening to the Comte de Beauveaux. We start for Brussels to-night, and probably many years will elapse ere I again see England. Hoping you will be as happy as I am at present, I remain, dear Herbert, ever your faithful friend,—

"LAURA DE BEAUVEAUX."

"Tell my brother we were married at the French Consulate, and that he need not trouble himself any further about his sister."

When Leveson had finished reading, Lord Arthur gave a sigh of relief.

"Thank Heaven it is not quite so bad as I feared," he said, with a shudder, "although it is bad enough for Laura to have married an adventurer. I tremble when I think of her future."

Leveson did not reply. He was thinking of the Hermitage and its lovely occupant. He was free. A feeling of joy thrilled his whole being, for now nothing could stand between Rosie Leatrange and himself.

He comforted Chadwick as best he might, and walked with him part of the way home; and then, upon retiring to his chambers, went to his desk, and wrote a long, long letter to Rosie.

Six months later Rosie and Herbert were married at the simple little church in the Warwickshire hamlet.

The country people came to witness the ceremony from all the little villages for miles around, and the path from the church to the gates of the Hermitage was several inches thick with flowers, the humble offerings of humble admirers.

The bride's spiritual beauty was the topic upon every lip, and as they were seated in the carriage on their way to the station from whence they were to take the train to Lord Leveson's seat, the brilliant young statesman drew her closely to him, and their lips met in one long, passionate communion.

"And this is love!" murmured Rosie, nestling closer to his side.

"My darling," he replied, "this is 'The Love that Dies not!'"

[THE END.]

## A WIND OF FATE.

—o—

WHEN mamma and I decided to pass the summer at Greylock, a quiet little seaport on the East coast, of course Fred Lingard made arrangements to spend his holiday there also. For Fred and I were engaged—at least, we were as much engaged as I would consent to be. I said we were "half engaged," which always made mamma very indignant.

"Nobody ever heard of such a thing," was her displeased answer to all such statements on my part.

But I didn't care if it was unheard of. When people were really engaged they began to think about getting married, which I never did. I was in no hurry to marry Fred or anybody else—I liked my freedom too well.

Fred himself took our engagement seriously enough, at least, as seriously as it was in his nature to take anything, for he was about as harum-scarum as I, and mamma could tell you how bad that was, if you were to ask her.

I think, between us, we were somewhat of a trial to dignified, sober, proper mamma—full of anxiety as to the never troubled me.

Of the two she minded Fred less. For one thing, he was a man, and many things were allowable for him that I could not do, as mamma often reminded me. Besides, she forgave Fred a good deal because of his devotion to me, for he really was devoted—at least, as much as I would allow him to be. Too much attention from one person, however agreeable, always bored me.

So when Fred, on being told of our plans, announced his intention of coming to Greylock in August, when his holiday began, I frowned, and said rather pettishly,—

"Why don't you go somewhere else, where you can see new people? You must be tired of the sight of me. And Greylock is a very stupid place, besides."

Whereat mamma looked very much shocked; but Fred only laughed.

"Perhaps you are tired of the sight of me?" he suggested, amiably. "Why do you go there if it is stupid?"

"Oh—because I am tired of the rush and excitement of fashionable summer resorts, which you never seem to be. I want to go where it is quiet and solitary, where I shall meet nobody I know."

"How can you be sure that I am not tired too? I need rest as well as you," he continued, quite unruffled. "Of course, if you don't want me to go, I won't," he concluded, looking so nearly hurt that I relented and accorded him my gracious permission.

Mamma and I left town early in June. We had engaged rooms with a widow "who had seen better days." We had been recommended to her by an acquaintance, to whom she was a distant relation. Mrs. McClure lived in a little cottage down by the sea, taking one or two lodgers during the summer in order to eke out her scanty income. Unexceptionable references being one of her requirements, we were very glad that she consented to accommodate us.

Greylock owned one small hotel and a few boarding-houses; but it was, as I have said, very quiet. The sea-air and the rest, however, were just what I needed, and they soon brought back the colour and flesh of which the winter's disquisitions had deprived me.

It was not a very large place, but it boasted a small aristocracy, of which the minister and the doctor were the chief lights. Beside the floating population in summer, the regular inhabitants were mostly the fishermen and their families.

One day, in the course of some neighbourhood gossip with my landlady, I happened to mention Dr. Risley's name, and I remarked that I had never met him. "I have had the pleasure of seeing your minister, and he is a dear old man," I added.

"The doctor's not old, miss—not much more than thirty," said Mrs. McClure, picking up the sock she was knitting, and clicking her needles as she talked. "But he's a character for you," she continued. "His sister ain't very young; she lives with him—she and Miss Grace. That big old house on the hill is theirs. He has money, they say; but he seems to have settled down here for good. He tends all the poor folks round for nothing, and it's to be said they all adore him."

"Who is Miss Grace?" I asked, a question now and then being all that was necessary to stimulate the old lady's unceasing flow of garrulity.

"She's his ward," was the prompt reply; "and a pretty girl she is, too. He thinks a sight of her, and she of him. I suppose they'll get married, after a while."

This seeming to be the natural conclusion of the matter, I was not inclined to doubt it; and presently the subject was dropped.

Not long after this I walked down to one of the fishermen's cottages, where a little girl lived who was ill. I had become interested in her, and was anxious to know how she was. I knocked at the door, and it was opened by a ruddy-looking, rather grave-faced man of thirty or thereabout. I felt sure he was the doctor, and so he proved to be.

In the absence of her mother, the little invalid introduced us, and we talked quite unconstrainedly. There was a naive simplicity about the doctor that delighted me—it was so novel. He never looked at me to see whether I was handsome, and there was no flattery, either conscious or unconscious, in his manner. Accustomed as I am to it in society, its absence was rather refreshing than otherwise to me.

We met several times after this, in the same way, and made acquaintance with each other rapidly. We were both of us much interested in little Bessie, and this helped to break the ice very quickly.

One day, on my return from a long walk, mamma met me with the announcement that there had been visitors.

"Miss Risley, the doctor's sister, and his ward, Miss Kimball, have just gone."

I felt somewhat disappointed, as I was slightly curious to see the doctor's family—particularly the younger lady, in whom he was supposed to be interested.

"Miss Risley is plain, and not particularly attractive," continued mamma; "but Miss Kimball is very pretty and agreeable. They were sorry that you were not at home; but I promised them that we would return their visit soon."

Accordingly, in the course of the week, we called at the big house on the hill. It was a queer rambling old-fashioned dwelling. Somehow it reminded me of the doctor himself.

The ladies answered to mamma's description; but the elder was sufficiently like her brother to impress me pleasantly. Miss Kimball was about eighteen; a graceful blonde, with delightfully ingenuous ways. I was pleased with her at once.

After we had talked for a few minutes, the door opened and the doctor appeared, looking rather abstracted; but I decided that his manners were charming—the height of simplicity.

"What an oddity!" remarked mamma to me afterwards. But he impressed me, as usual, as an agreeable one.

Presently he asked me whether I would like to see his collection.

Now, I have but one hobby—natural history—so I accepted the doctor's proposition with alacrity. Mamma declined going, so we two—Grace, as I learned later to call her, and I—went into the back parlour.

When I saw the result of the doctor's investigations I concluded that I had discovered the reason for his burying himself and his unusual talents in this quiet place. He wanted time for research.

"Look at all these horrid things he wastes his leisure over," said Miss Kimball, smiling mischievously at her guardian, bending lovingly over his treasures.

He did not seem at all disturbed by her raillery. That he was both fond and proud of his ward was very evident. There certainly seemed to be a good understanding between them.

Our acquaintance with the Risleys ripened rapidly into friendship. They were almost the only persons in Greylock for whom I cared. The summer boarders were too much like inferior imitations of the people I had left behind in town, and the regular inhabitants were not of the intellectual order—generally speaking, at least.

Miss Risley improved so much on acquaintance that mamma and she formed quite an intimacy. I had become very fond of Grace, and as for the doctor he and I were fast friends. He interested me because he was so unlike the society men with whom I was acquainted. He was what neither Fred Lingard nor any of them was—thoroughly in earnest. We met very often in the course of my visits to Bessie Lane, who was still an invalid. We even reached the stage of friendship when I ventured to rally him on being willing to remain in obscurity; but I did not make much impression.

It was August now, and Fred would soon arrive, whereat mamma was greatly delighted—more so than I, I'm afraid. I did not feel as enthusiastic, perhaps, as I might have, or as mamma thought I should.

Walking along the cliffs I met the doctor returning from some visits. It was the day I had just received Fred's letter announcing his coming. We began talking, and I remarked carelessly,—

"We expect a friend here shortly. I don't know whether you have heard me speak of him—Mr. Lingard."

"No," replied the doctor, giving me one of his calm, scrutinising glances, which seemed to read my very soul.

I felt as if it would be impossible to hide anything from him, even if one tried. I felt sure that he divined at once how matters stood with Fred and me, and of course I blushed a little, just because I did not wish to. He began to talk of something else, however, and in five minutes I had forgotten all about the matter. When the doctor talked, one forgot everything except what he was saying—at least, if one had sense enough to appreciate him.

Towards nightfall the next day a terrible storm broke.

We learned that there was a ship tossing in the tempest, just outside the harbour. Very much excited by the idea, I insisted on being a witness of the sight.

Mamma yielded a reluctant consent, and, well wrapped up in waterproof cloak and shoes, I accompanied Jennie, the stout serving-maid, to the cliffs, where a thrilling scene presented itself.

The waves rose high, and the wind drove the ship wildly about.

The lighthouse-keeper and all the men were there, getting out the boats. Foremost among them, leading and invigorating, was the doctor's tall figure. I now saw him in a new light—not a student or naturalist, but a leader of men: bold, fearless, and athletic.

"Catching sight of me, he gave me a reassuring glance, even a smile, and, coming towards me, said,—

"I do not think the danger is very great."

"Shall you venture out?" I asked, anxiously. The sea looked awful to my unaccustomed eyes.

"I do not think there will be any need," he answered. "These men are more skilful with the oars than I. All they need is a head to direct them—there are hands enough."

The doctor was right. Everybody on board the ship was saved, and even the vessel itself was found next morning to be less damaged than had been feared. But I had gained a new respect for my friend.

The following day dawned clear and beautiful. Fred was expected to arrive, so mamma, Grace, and I walked down to the little station to meet him.

Grace looked unusually pretty, and I told her so. She blushed very charmingly. I sang praises of the doctor's conduct the night before, and that delighted her, I could see.

Just as we reached the station the train rushed rapidly in, stopping long enough to give a well-known figure time to alight; and, in a moment, Fred was holding mamma and me each by the hand, giving Grace a sidelong glance.

Disengaging my hand, I introduced them, and we chatted gaily as we walked towards home.

Fred was in the best of spirits, but he looked very young and boyish to me.

His arrival made the "partie-carrée" complete, so it did not disturb our intimacy. Fred is a sensible youth on the whole, and he liked the doctor at once. We had a great deal of fun and enjoyment in the days that followed. The doctor seemed to have dropped his grave student's mantle and to have grown quite boyish. I liked Grace better, the more I understood the sweetness of her disposition.

August melted almost imperceptibly into September. Soon it would be time to return

home. Fred must go back, he said, by the end of September; so we about decided that we would accompany him.

One morning, towards the close of our last week I awakened with a violent headache.

"I was going to propose a row," said Fred, at the breakfast-table.

"You will have to dispense with my society, then," I answered; "but the rest of you can go."

At first he protested, and offered his services to me; but I declined them.

"I am going to my own room," I said—I am afraid, a little irritably—"to lie down." And I went.

I fell asleep, and about two hours later awoke, feeling somewhat better. I fancied that the fresh air would do me good; so, arraying myself in a bright-scarlet jacket, for the weather was cool, I started for a walk.

I sauntered towards the boat-landing, wondering whether the others had gone rowing. If so, I should probably meet them on their return. A fresh breeze blew so strongly that it almost cured my headache. I buttoned my jacket up close and walked briskly on.

Suddenly, my name was spoken in a cheerful tone,—

"Miss Grafton!"

Looking up I saw the doctor.

"Good-morning," I said. Then, "Have you seen anything of the others?"

"No. I have been busy all the morning," was the reply. "I have been rather idle of late," he continued, smiling.

"Let us walk down to the beach," I suggested. "Fred wanted to have a row; perhaps he and Grace have gone. I had such a headache that I had to lie down."

The doctor looked keenly into my face as I spoke, and of course I blushed slightly. I was not in the least troubled about Fred. He might go rowing with all the young women in Christendom—I did not feel afraid.

We talked about other things until we reached the stone steps that led down to where the boats were fastened. They belonged to the doctor, and this was his land we were on.

As we walked along he looked rather abstracted. I wondered whether he liked the idea of Grace's going out with Fred alone. I felt like reassuring him; but I did not dare.

We stood at the top of the terrace, surrounded by old trees, one of which overhung the balustrade, almost brushing my hat with its leaves. We looked out across the sea.

Just a little distance above the land jutted out into a point, on which the lighthouse stood. Inside this sheltered spot the water was perfectly calm near the shore, but, farther out, a sudden gale had ruffled the waves into rough, white-capped, angry surges. The sky was banked up with heavy grey clouds that threatened a storm. It hardly seemed safe to be away from shore in a rowboat.

Tossed on the highest billows, almost out of sight, was a tiny speck. Could it be their boat? Looking down, we saw that one was missing—a mere cockleshell. I glanced at the doctor. His face was grave, even anxious.

"You are alarmed!" But he was looking eagerly out at the troubled waters beyond the point.

"I am going to take one of those stronger boats and go after them," he said, abruptly.

"Is there danger?" I went on, anxiously.

"A little," was the reply, "in that frail boat. I cannot imagine what possessed Mr. Lingard to take it."

My heart sank within me. I hadn't much confidence in Fred's skill.

"But you will be risking three lives instead of two," I continued, hurriedly.

He smiled.

"No, I can manage a boat better than Mr. Lingard, and I shall take one that is stronger." As he spoke he sprang down the steps into the skiff, and, in a moment, was pulling with long, steady strokes, out towards the other boat.

The waves beat against the little craft, but

he seemed to control it perfectly. The keen wind still blew, but I felt as if I should suffocate. I unfastened my jacket at the throat and pushed it back. As I leaned eagerly forward I pressed my hand against my heart to stop its violent beating.

Now he has reached the little boat. I shut my eyes. When I opened them I uttered an exclamation, "Thank Heaven!"—they were safe in the larger one. As they came nearer I could see that Fred was exhausted by his struggles with the elements. The doctor was rowing with all his might and main. Would his strength fail before he reached the shore? Would the winds and waves overwhelm them?

Nearer and nearer they were coming. I almost held my breath. There, close to the shore—they had reached it—in an instant the doctor had sprung out—then my heart gave one gasp of relief—then I lost consciousness.

When I opened my eyes I was lying on the bed in my darkened room, mamma sitting by me, holding my hand. Gradually memory and thought returned to me.

"Are they all safe?" I gasped.

"Yes, yes—all safe," was mamma's assurance, as she bent solicitously over me.

Then I sank back on my pillows, and closed my eyes for a moment. As my mind grew clearer I realised what that short hour of peril had showed me in all its terrible vividness—what, but for that test of danger, I might never have known. But could the knowledge bring me anything but misery?

"Would you like to see Fred?" mamma was asking me.

"No," I answered, wearily; "I don't want to see anybody—I feel too tired."

Somehow I shrank from facing them all again. What had I said or done in that time of danger? Anything to reveal my secret—the secret that I had never guessed before?

"Nobody washurt, thank Heaven!" mamma was saying; "not even the good doctor."

"Nobody?"

I closed my eyes, and turned my face to the wall.

Mamma left me, hoping I would sleep; but I felt in no mood for that. Yet, sooner or later, I must dress and go downstairs. How I longed to put it off—to postpone meeting them all; but what was the use?

So I rose, dressed, and presented myself at the tea-table, looking a little ghost-like. Fred seemed glad to see me, though he only took my hand and pressed it. He was a trifle pale, but he looked very bright.

After some conversation on different subjects mamma turned to me, and said,—

"You won't be able to go the day after tomorrow, will you?"

"Indeed I shall," I answered, quickly. "I should like to get away from this place as soon as possible!"

I felt that my tone was almost peevish.

Mamma looked at me sympathisingly, as if she could guess why I was so anxious to leave.

I was sitting in the porch, in the soft September sunshine, the next morning. Fred had gone to the post-office. I had a book in my lap, but I was not looking at it. I did not try to read. My thoughts wandered back over the past summer, a strange mingling of bitter and sweet.

Hearing my name spoken in a familiar voice, I looked up and saw the doctor smiling down at me in his usual way. He shook my hand.

"Grace sent me to bring you over," he said. "Put on your shawl and come."

Slowly, unwillingly, I obeyed, and we walked leisurely along the cliffs.

"So you are going away to-morrow?" he said, after awhile.

"Yes," I answered, languidly.

As I saw the calm smiling sea I shivered a little, thinking of the harm it might do. We were some distance from the boat-landing, and I felt that it was incumbent on me to speak of his bravery yesterday, but I did not want to.

At last I forced myself to say, not without an effort,—

"You were very brave yesterday."

He smiled and answered,—

"Oh! it was nothing! I would have done much more for you, had it been necessary." He said it quite as a matter of course.

"For me?" I ejaculated. "I don't understand!"

"Have you no interest in Mr. Lingard—no special interest?" he asked, slowly, looking straight at me.

"Oh, yes—we are old friends," I answered.

"Nothing more?" he persisted, very gently. I felt myself growing angry. My eyes fell, and the hot colour crept into my cheeks.

At last I broke the silence and said, softly,—

"You had someone in the boat in whom you were interested, too."

"You mean—Grace."

I did not look at him as I answered "Yes." "You are right," he went on, gravely. "I am very fond of Grace, and she is very fond of me."

"I am very glad," I answered, wearily.

"You deserve each other, and I am sure you ought to be happy."

"Yes, we ought to be, unless we wanted something else that we could not get."

"People want a great many things that they can't always have," I said, rather sharply. "They may as well make up their minds to do without them."

"That is true," he assented, gravely.

I began to think either his brain or mine must be softening.

"I suppose you did not care about my fate in those moments of suspense?" he asked, abruptly.

I felt his earnest gaze, but I did not dare face it.

"Certainly I cared," trying to make my voice sound unconcerned. "We are friends?"

"Surely! Even Fred could not object to that!"

"Nor Grace!" I could not resist saying, though I knew my voice was unsteady.

"Nor Grace!" he echoed. "But if they did care?" he added.

I looked at him in speechless astonishment. Just at that moment we rounded a curve in the shore, a sheltered sequestered spot, and saw two figures standing close together—Fred and Grace. He was holding her hand and looking down into her eyes as only a lover can look.

I stood perfectly still in silent amazement.

"I don't think they would care very much," whispered the doctor. "It looks to me as if we had been jilted."

"I am so glad!" escaped my lips, just audibly.

"Does that mean that you don't care for Fred, and do care for me?" he half-whispered.

I did not answer, but he knew what I meant just the same.

"It was that hour of danger that told us all the truth," the doctor explained to me later.

"When I reached the little boat I found Grace clinging to Fred as she never clung to me—and, when I reached the shore, you just stretched out your hands to me and spoke my name. Then we all knew."

"Blessed gale!" I answered, looking into his happy eyes. "Our lives might have all been wrecked had it not been for that fortunate WIND OF FATE."

=====

A CERTAIN amount of opposition is a great help to a man. Kites rise against the wind and not with the wind. Even a head wind is better than none. No man ever worked his passage anywhere in a dead calm. Let no man wax pale, therefore, because of opposition; opposition is what he wants and must have, to be good for anything.

## FACETIÆ.

WHY is a little boy learning the alphabet like a postage stamp? Because he gets stuck on the letters.

OLD GENTLEMAN: "Mother, is that our daughter singing so badly, or is it the dog howling so sweetly?"

It is said that short, dumpy people are more humorous than long, lank folks, on the ground that brevity is the soul of wit.

Time is always represented carrying a scythe, and we suppose he will continue to carry this primitive agricultural implement until time shall be no mow.

CUSTOMER (getting his hair cut): "Didn't you nip off a piece of the ear then?" Barber: (reassuringly): "Yes, milor, a small piece, but not 'nough to affect de hearin'."

A LITTLE boy went to his first tea-party when four years and three months old. Upon his hostess asking him how he liked his tea, he replied: "It is very nice, but it tastes very much of the water."

JONES asked his wife: "Why is a husband like dough?" He expected she would give it up, and was going to tell her it was because a woman needs him; but she said it was because it was hard to get off her hands.

We know of a beautiful girl who would prove a capital speculation for a fortune-hunter of the right sort. Her voice is of silver, her hair of gold, her teeth of pearl, her cheeks of rubies, and her eyes of diamonds.

CUSTOMER: "I can't pay you to-day. You see, the shoemaker has just been here, and—" Tailor: "Yes, I met him on the way up, and he said you'd put him off because you'd got to pay the tailor to-day. So here's your bill, sir."

A POPULAR clergyman was greatly bored by a lady who admired him without reserve. "Oh, my dear Mr. X.," said she, one Sunday afternoon, "there isn't any harm in one loving one's pastor, is there?" "Certainly not, madame," replied the worthy cleric, "not the least in the world, so long as the feeling is not reciprocated."

THOUGHTFUL FRED.—Master Fred is one of those youngsters whose curiosity is unappeasable, and who seem always wound up to ask questions. One day he was to have his hair cut, and his father jokingly said it must be cut very short to stop his asking so many questions. "Oh, that wouldn't do any good," said Fred. "You'd have to cut my head clean off; the questions are all inside of it."

NATURAL SELECTION.—"Men usually marry their opposites," said Cholli, reflectively. "That is true," said the old man, a little surprised at Cholli's unusual brilliancy. "All the married men I know have married members of the opposite sex." "I mean," said Cholli, "that a tall man is apt to marry a short woman and vice versa; I wonder what kind of a woman I will marry?" And the old man opined that he would be liable to marry a girl with some sense.

KNOCKED OUT BY THE LIGHTNING.—During a recent rain storm two negroes met in the road—and as they had been quarrelling with one another, thought they would settle their differences there. A large tree stood close by, and one of the darkeys pulled off his coat and went to the tree to put it down. Just then lightning struck the tree, ran down it, and knocked the negro over. The other one thinking that he was killed, started off, but the fallen darkey jumped up and yelled: "Yer took 'vantage and hit me wid er rock. Try it ergin; I see ready now." The other darkey only pointed to the tree, saying: "I see got enough of you. If lightning can't hurt yer old head, I can't." The negro looked at the tree, and then looked for his coat; but it had disappeared and he has never found it. Now he'll walk two miles before he'll pass by that tree.

He: "It is strange, dear, we cannot speak without quarrelling." She: "And yet, when we quarrel we don't speak."

"CAN you use this?" timidly inquired the poet, as he laid a bundle on the desk. "I think I can," said the editor, affably. "I am just about to start a fire in the office."

MAGISTRATE (to plaintiff with lamp on his head): "If your wife threw a flatiron at you, why didn't you dodge?" Plaintiff: "I did, your honour, and that's how I come to get hit."

Mrs. CAUDLE: "Doctor, I want you to put up a powerful sedative for my wife; give me the best specific for insomnia you know of." Doctor: "What's the matter? Can't she sleep?" "Yes, I think so; but I can't."

PAT, for the first time at a hotel table, saw a boarder reach for the celery several times and placidly proceed to dispose of it. Pat gazed in dismay, and turned to his fellow countryman with: "Oh! moi! he's aitin' the bokay!"

"YOUNG man," he said, solemnly, "what would you think if I should put an enemy into my mouth to steal away my brains?" "I would—hie—think, sir," hiccupped the young man, "that you were going to an unnecessary expense."

"MARTA," said Brown, after they had moved into their new house, "we have a spacious back yard that ought to be put to some use. Suppose you get some poultry?" "No, John." "But why not?" "If our neighbours want eggs let them buy them."

AN INSIPID ROMEO.—Mrs. Hobson (discussing an amateur theatrical entertainment): "It struck me, Mr. Oldboy, that Mr. Smith's Romeo was a very tame affair." Mr. Oldboy: "Necessarily so, my dear madam; Mrs. Smith played Juliet, you know."

"WHAT does the M.D. after your name stand for, Doctor?" asked young Mr. Toofunny, at the reception. "Many Debts," replied the physician, with a look that made Toofunny forget his venerable little joke and feel that the doctor's bill had entered his soul.

A WOMAN was brought before a police magistrate and asked her age. She replied: "Thirty-five." The Magistrate: "I have heard you have given that same age in this court for the last five years." The Woman: "No doubt, your honour. I'm not one of those females who say one thing to-day and another to-morrow."

THE FORCE OF HABIT.—Socks: "Buskin, me boy, I was astonished to learn just now that you ran off the stage in the middle of a scene last night overcome by nervousness." Buskin: "A veteran like myself attacked by stage fright? By the gods, no! Go to, good Socks." Socks: "Well, what was the matter, then?" Buskin: "A boy in the gallery gave so good an imitation of a locomotive whistle that I made an involuntary rush to get on the other track."

A BOY'S WIT.—Harry's mother had repeatedly reproved him for joking on the Lord's day, but with little effect. Last Sabbath he was guilty of the same offence, for which his mother took him across her knee and administered a wholesome spanking. "You naughty boy," she said, as he righted himself up again: "don't you know what day it is?" "I should think it was Palm Sunday," replied the little reprobate, with a reguish twinkle in his fearful eye.

ONE OF FORTUNE'S FAVOURITES.—"Young man," he said, "do you respect the fair sex, as all young men should?" "I do, indeed," responded the young man, with emotion. "And there is one of the fair sex, sir, whom I not only respect but adore, and she adores me." "You are fortunate." "Fortunate is no name for it, my venerable friend. Why, in the summer time that girl serves in an ice-cream and confectionery shop, and in the winter she is cashier in an oyster shop."

It is said that a baby can wear out a pair of kid shoes in twenty-four hours. This is pretty fast work, but an ordinary baby can do much better. It can wear out the patience of an average bachelor in about seven minutes.

LITTLE BILLY, who was about four years old, after waiting for his lunch a good while with commendable patience, said: "Mamma, may I have some sardines and bread?" To which the fond mother replied: "Not now, Billy. Wait until I am ready to give them to you." "But, ma, it's me who's hungry, not you." And the poor little fellow's eyes filled with tears.

A MINISTER, in visiting the house of a man who was somewhat of a tippler, cautioned him about drink. All the answer the man gave was that the doctor allowed it to him. "Well," said the minister, "has it done you any good?" "I fancy it has," answered the man; "for I got a keg of it a week ago, and I could hardly lift it, and now I can carry it round the room."

A YOUNG man having preached for Dr. Edmonds one day, was anxious to get a word of applause for his labour of love. The grave doctor, however, did not introduce the subject, and his younger brother was obliged to bait the hook for him. "I hope, sir, I did not weary your people by the length of my sermon to-day?" "No, sir, not at all; nor by the depth either." The young man was silent.

A GENTLEMAN from Manchester, who came to London not long since, had a commission from a lady to her brother, which he was anxious to carry out at once. "Where will I find Mr. B., who is in the grocery business?" he asked of a Cockney. "There are two brothers of that name, both in the grocery business in Kensington," was the reply. "Which do you wish to see?" "I mean the one that has a sister in Manchester."

A MAN going home from his work at a late hour in the night saw that the occupants of a house standing flush with the street had left a window up, and he decided to warn them and prevent a burglary. Putting his head into the window, he called out: "Hulloa! Good peop—" That was all he said. A whole pall of water struck him in the face; and as he staggered back, a woman shrieked out: "Didn't I tell you what you'd get if you wasn't home by nine o'clock?"

## HOW TEW PIK OUT A KAT.

The hardest thing, in every day life, iz tew pik out a good kat, not bekause kats are so akase, az bekause they are so plenty.

If thare want bat 2 kats on earth thare wouldn't be no trouble, yu would pik one and the other phellow would pik one, and that would end the contest.

Tew pik out a good kat, one that will tend tew bizness, and not astronimize nights, nor praktias operatik strains, is an evidence ov genius.

I don't luv kats; enuff tew pik one out enny how, but I have picked a kiten out ov a swill barrel before now with a pair of tongs, just tew save life.

Color iz no kriterion of kats. I have seen dreadful mean kats ov all colors.

Kats with blew eyes, and very long whiskers, with the points ov their ears a leetle rounded are not to be trusted; they will steal yung chickens, and hook kream oph from the milk pans every good chance they kan git.

Kats with gra eyes, very-short whiskers, and four white toes are the very best kats there iz to lay in front ov the kitchen stove all day, and be stepped on their tail every fu minitts.

Kats with blak eyes, no whiskers at all, and sharp pointed ears are liable to phists. Picking out good kats haz alwus bin a mighty cluss transackshun from the fust beginning. The best way haz alwus ben tew take them without enny picking, jist az they cum, and let them go, jist as they cum.

JOSH BILLINGS.

## SOCIETY.

The most interesting event recently at Balmoral, outbidding even German correspondence, was the death of the Queen's favourite old servant, Mrs. Hull, who entered Her Majesty's service as nurse to the Prince of Wales, when that illustrious infant was only a few days old. "Dear old May," as the Queen always called her, was a kind and conscientious attendant to everyone of the Royal babes who came after the Heir Apparent, and when these were at length all promoted out of the nursery, the Queen still retained a great regard for their nurse. Mrs. Hull had attained her seventy-eighth year, and was in very poor health during Her Majesty's last residence at Windsor; so the Queen's carriage was repeatedly to be seen in Dorset road, where the old lady had resided ever since her retirement from the Royal service.

The Princess of Wales and her daughters are at Aberfeldie, and it is no wonder if the Princess of Wales would greatly have preferred a visit to the cheery paternal home in Scandinavia to being rusticated at Aberfeldie. Highland scenery will have no special attractions after what she has seen in Austria of late, and Her Royal Highness notoriously detests the northern climate, the sound of bagpipes, and the Scotch Sabbath. As to the small-talk at Balmoral, with German politics, and nursery anticipations, it is best not to say exactly what the Princess thinks of these! And it is upon her shoulders that the weight of such an atmosphere must descend; the young people are free to walk and ride as they list, while their parent sacrifices on the shrine of filial devotion in her husband's absence.

The latest matrimonial announcement from the other side of the Atlantic is the engagement of Miss Dottie Lerega to the Duke of Newcastle. Mr. John Lerega is a well-known and, hitherto, fortunate operator in Wall-street. Mrs. Lerega, in company with her daughter, is at present "doing the Continent," where the younger lady's beauty and costumes are a constant source of admiration. A cousin of Miss Lerega married Mr. Charles Pelham Clinton, a cousin of the Duke, and it was at their home that he first met his *fiancée* when staying in New York last winter. There is at least one fact that tends to discredit the rumoured engagement. Mr. Lerega's expenditure has kept pace with his income, and Dottie's "face is her fortune." Whether this *dot* will suffice for the Duke remains to be seen.

Buxton has been very gay, and quite a bevy of fashionables have been seen day by day, in the gardens while the band played. Of course there was the usual complement of persons requiring a holiday at such resorts; the Dean of Christchurch and Mrs. Liddell rubbing shoulders with the Hon. and Rev. A. and Mrs. Hanbury, &c., Lord and Lady Seymour and their son, Mr. and Lady Harriet Lindsey, Lady Henry Gordon Lennox, and many other persons of rank were also to be seen; and the gardens were in quite unusual beauty after the long rains which had preceded a burst of glorious weather.

The weather was so bad in Austria that the Prince of Wales and the Crown Prince had to give up their Weissenbrühl expedition, whereas Bertie was exceedingly disappointed. The two Princes went shooting at Luxemburg instead, inviting the King of the Hellenes to be of the party; but his Majesty was unable to join them. Some people never will be content, and it appears that His Royal Highness has given great offence to the German Emperor, and to Berlin Society generally, by enjoying himself so much in Vienna, and by fraternising with the Heir-Apparent to the Austro-Hungarian Crown.

## STATISTICS.

THERE are in North America about 300,000 persons keeping bees. The annual honey product is about 100,000,000 pounds, and its value nearly £3,000,000. The annual wax product is about 500,000 pounds, and its value more than £20,000.

In the year of our Lord 1800 there were 223 penal offences in England. A man might be hanged for stealing something worth five shillings; for cutting down a young tree, for appearing in disguise, for poaching. In 1834 there were 480 death sentences; in 1838 only 116.

A WRITER says that if the supposed entire living population of the globe—1,400,000,000—were divided into families of five persons each, all these families could be found room for in Texas, U.S., each family having a house-lot of half an acre, and then have more than 70,000,000 family lots untaken.

WHEN the war ended in 1865 the total of the United States national debt, exclusive of the legal tender currency, was, in round numbers, £476,000,000, on which was paid £30,200,000 interest annually. Now the debt has been reduced to about £200,000,000, and the annual interest payment is only about £8,100,000.

## GEMS.

GREAT thoughts proceed from the heart.

LOVE is never lasting which flames before it burns.

THE indolent are not wholly indolent. Though the body may shirk labour, the brain is not idle. If it do not grow corn it will grow thistles.

STRENGTH must be found in thought, or it will never be found in words. High-sounding words without thoughts corresponding, are efforts without effect.

TRUE wealth consists in health, vigour, and courage, domestic quiet, concord, public liberty, plenty of all that is necessary, and contempt for all that is superfluous.

STICK to what you understand, although it may yield but a moderate return, and do not dabble in matters that you know nothing about in the hope of becoming rich.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

LEMON PIE.—Grate the yellow rind, and take the juice of one lemon, one cup sugar; take a heaping tablespoonful of corn flour and mix it with cold water; add a cup of boiling water, and cook a little; turn together; beat the yolk of one egg, and add to the mixture; beat the whites of two eggs to a froth with a little sugar, and put over the top after the pie is baked, and set in the oven to slightly brown.

GINGERBREAD.—Take half a pound of white sugar and half a pound of golden syrup, or, better still, half a pound of honey. Put them into a saucepan and bring them to a boiling-point; then stir in half a pound of butter till it is quite melted. Beat up four eggs in a basin, and then pour the mixture from the saucepan into the eggs, stirring it all the while. From half an ounce to an ounce of ground ginger must now be added, and either three teaspoonfuls of baking-powder or one moderately full of carbonate of soda. Lastly, stir it all into one pound of flour, and place the dough in a well-buttered tin, about an inch and a half thick, to allow for rising. Let the oven be only moderately hot, at least to begin, and it should take three quarters of an hour or rather more. When nearly ready to come out of the oven brush over the top of the cake with egg beaten up to a froth to glaze it, then finish the baking for just a few minutes.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

IN TWO HEMISPHERES.—The icebergs of the Arctic Ocean are irregular in shape, with lofty pinnacles, cloud-capped towers and glittering domes, whereas the southern icebergs are flat-topped and solid looking. The former reach the shore by narrow fords, but the formation of the latter is more regular. The Northern are neither so large nor so numerous as those met with in the Southern Ocean. In 1855, an immense berg was sighted in forty-two degrees south latitude, which drifted about for several months and was sighted by many ships. It was three hundred feet high, sixty miles long, and forty miles wide, and was in shape like a horseshoe. Its two sides enclosed a sheltered bay measuring forty miles across. A large emigrant ship ran into this bay, and was lost with all on board. Only about one-ninth of an iceberg is visible above water. There are several well authenticated accounts of icebergs one thousand feet high having been sighted in the Southern Ocean. This would make their total height nine thousand feet, or nearly two miles.

BRUTAL PUNISHMENT.—Boxing the ears is a too common form of punishment practised by irritable and ignorant persons, and it is almost always done in fits of sudden anger. I say done by irritable and ignorant persons, because it seems to us that no person of any information on the subject would allow his passion to get the better of his judgment in such a matter. The drum of the ear is of paper-like thinness; it may, and has been, in a number of cases, ruptured by a single slap on the side of the head, incurable deafness resulting. Says an eminent physician: "All strokes on the head of children with an angry hand are brutal and criminal." In the same connection he adds that "a generous, wise and humane parent should allow a night to intervene between the commission of the fault on the part of a child and any decided punishment. The veriest thief should be allowed time, lest the law should be vindictive and wrathful. And shall a man or woman punish an unresisting child with angry inconsideration, with unreasoning wrath in the heart? It is monstrous."

OPEN-AIR ENTERTAINMENTS OF OLDEN DAYS.—Our forefathers seemed to have encouraged open-air entertainments, allusions to which are of frequent occurrence in the literature of the past. Thus Henry VIII., when young took much interest in pageantry, and among the shows devised in his honour was one exhibited by the officers of his guards. According to Strutt, as many as two hundred of them, clothed in green, and headed by their captain, who personated Robin Hood, invited the king to see in what manner he and his companions lived. The king complied, and was escorted into the wood, where an arbour was made with green boughs, having a hall or great chamber, and an inner chamber, and the whole was covered with flowers and sweet herbs. When the company had entered the arbour Robin Hood excused the want of more abundant refreshments, saying to the king,—"Sir, we outlaws usually breakfast upon venison, and have no other food to offer you." The king and queen then sat down and were served with venison and wine, and after the entertainment they departed. Then there were the companies of strolling players who travelled about the country, representing plays wherever they could obtain adequate reward. Sometimes these were performed in the halls of corporations, but more commonly in the yards of inns, or in the open air. But, without entering further into the history of all these various entertainments as conducted in olden times, it may be noted that, lacking oftentimes the elaborate adjuncts of modern shows and plays, they were quite inexpensive in their preparations, and without much delay could, if occasion offered, be performed on the village green to a rustic audience.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

M. L. T.—We regret very much that we are quite unable to inform you.

C. C. N.—Both are correct. There is a kind of boat that is sometimes termed a scull, and there is also a peculiar single oar, used in propelling a boat from the stern, that is also termed a scull.

A. V. V.—Certain prepared toilet soaps, in which glycerine is one of the constituents, are claimed to whiten the skin by a peculiar stimulation of the tissues, but it is doubtful if they have much effect.

C. P. C.—Brobdingnag is an imaginary country mentioned by Gulliver in his "Travels." The inhabitants were enormous giants, being, according to his description, as tall as an ordinary church-steeple, with all their surroundings in proportion.

HARIBET.—He seems to be rather of an obstinate and unyielding nature. Give him back his likeness yourself, telling him at the same time that you think it evident from his silence that he has ceased to care for you. This is due to your own self-respect.

NELLIE D.—1. Take plenty of open air exercise, live sparingly, chiefly on animal food; avoid sugar, starch, pastry, vegetables and beer or wine and spirits and only eat stale bread. 2. The best dentifrice is prepared chalk. 3. There are no valid objections to such a course. 4. Fair.

JOHN C.—It would be the most manly and straightforward plan if you like the sister best to write to the other and say plainly that you have no wish to deceive, and that as she declined to be engaged to you, you consider yourself quite free, and think the correspondence had better cease.

R. M. P.—There is no particular reason, except that the inexorable law of such matters has so willed it. Perhaps it may arise from the fact that gold is more precious than silver, and this explanation gains some colouring from the fact that the seventy-fifth anniversary is called the diamond wedding.

LOTTIE.—1. Certainly not. 2. Boiling water. 3. The lady should salute first. 4. Borax would simply have the effect of giving it a tendency to curl. 5. Very good. 6. Half a pint of strong cold beef tea every morning before breakfast is recommended for strengthening the voice. 7. We never attempt to guess ladies' ages.

C. C. W.—It should not be difficult for a man of energy, trustworthiness and experience to obtain such a situation. Be constantly on the look-out for a situation of the kind you consider yourself suited to fill, answer advertisements in the city papers, and consult those among your friends who would be apt to know of vacant positions that would suit you.

W. F. F.—The change in the colour of A's hair is due to some mysterious cause which we cannot even guess without further knowledge of the case. It probably is not due to alcoholic excesses alone, but the use of stimulants may have promoted and hastened the change. There are many authentic cases on record where the colour of human hair has changed from jet black to pure white within less than a week's time, but in these cases the change has generally been ascribed to a violent emotional strain and cerebral disturbance.

G. H. W.—If you are positive beyond the possibility of doubt that your love for her is of the kind that trial only strengthens, and if you are certain that her love for you is now a genuine affection instead of merely the romantic attachment of a girl of fifteen, it might be well for you to endeavour to bring about a reconciliation. Many of the young lady's indiscretions were doubtless due to her youth and her environment. As she grows older she will grow wiser, and will appreciate the necessity for education. But do not take any decided step in the matter until you are perfectly assured of her and your own feelings.

C. C. M.—Fishing nets are generally made of hemp or flax twine, but some are made of cotton and some of jute and other materials. The threads are not woven across each other close together as in cloth, but wide apart, so as to make square holes called meshes, each thread being fastened where it crosses another one by a kind of knot. The size of the meshes and of the twine differs in different kinds of nets. They are chiefly made by machinery now. Fishermen, as a rule, use only the seine, drift, and trawl nets. Some seine nets are nearly a fifth of a mile long. The drift net is made like the seine, but has no leads at the bottom. The trawl net is a kind of drag net for catching fish which swim near the bottom. It is usually dragged along by the fishing boat.

O. F. S.—The Chinooks pronounced che-nooks, the accent on the last syllable, constituted a family of Indian tribes on the north-west coast of North America, who formerly inhabited both banks of the Columbia River, from its mouth to the Grand Dalles, broken up into numerous bands. The Chinooks proper were on the north side, and the Clatsops on the south and along the coast. The language varied as the tribes extended into the interior. In all its dialects it is very complicated and difficult to pronounce. This led to the composition of the Chinook Jargon, a sort of *lingua franca* used by the traders, containing some Chinook words with terms from the Dutch, English, and many Indian languages, all corrupted into a new form. The Chinook Indians are now nearly extinct, a small band on the Chehalis Reservation in Washington Territory representing them in 1873. A vocabulary of their language, by George Gibbs, was published in Philadelphia in 1863, and a "Dictionary of the Chinook Jargon," thoroughly analysed by the same scholar, in the same year.

B. V.—Do not be at all discouraged. No young lady should permit any familiarity. You will not lose any valuable friend by modesty and reserve. You must wait until you meet with one who appreciates you.

W. W.—If the young lady you wish to inquire about is the eldest of the sisters, you should refer to her as Miss A. or Miss B., using only her surname. But if she is not the eldest sister, you should use both her Christian and surname, as Miss Sarah A. or Miss Alice B.

JENNIE.—If the young man is in a position to marry and support a family, your father would do well to ask him his intentions. If this is done delicately it will bring a proposal of marriage, and solve all your doubts. You have acted very properly. When he proposes you may kiss him and accept him.

A. A. B.—"El Dorado" is a Spanish term meaning the "golden land." The name was first given by a Spanish navigator, in 1531, to a country which he pretended to have discovered in the interior of South America, between the Orinoco and Amazon Rivers. The term has since been applied to various regions in which gold has been found.

L. L. D.—Your enthusiasm carries you too far. Do you mean to say that the food which our "dyspeptic farmers" raise and cure and provide for themselves is adulterated? If it is, who adulterates it? It is apparent, at a glance, that you are altogether mistaken as to this matter so far as the principal articles of food consumed by our farming population are concerned.

J. J. W.—1. Decidedly too early; four years later would be about the right age. 2. Certainly not. 3. There is no fixed period, but a man ought not as a rule to think of marriage much before he is five-and-twenty. 4. The wedding ring finger for a lady is the third finger of the left hand. 5. Drinking porter has no particular influence in making a person stout. Stoutness is, to a great extent, constitutional, and certainly not a thing to be desired. Aim at being healthy in mind and body.

## NEVER BE ASHAMED OF LOVE.

Why so shame-faced, pretty pair,  
Walking through the garden fair,  
In the shadows, in the sun,  
With your hearts that beat as one?

Do you fear the peering eyes,  
And the tongues so worldly wise?  
Blest ones! where'er you move,  
Never be ashamed of love.

Love, you know, is quite divine—  
Fixed as are the stars that shine;  
Love will brighten all your way,  
Guide and cheer you day by day.

Go your way, still hand in hand,  
Happiest twain in all the land,  
Just as much as if no two  
Ever felt this love but you.

Do not care for peering eyes,  
True love needeth no disguise;  
Good as gold 'twill ever prove—  
Never be ashamed of love.

M. A. K.

B. L. L.—You are placed in an awkward position, and of the two evils the least would be to give the young man up altogether. He is engaged to your sister, and therefore you are in duty bound to have nothing to say to him, especially on the sly. If he were really a manly young fellow, he would go straight to your sister, explain all the circumstances, and tell her frankly how matters stand. To go on in your present course can only mean the greatest unhappiness for all parties.

E. M. B.—Do? Why, he should enjoy himself to the best of his ability, and contribute all he can to the pleasure of the company. Because a young lady does a "fellow" the honour to permit him to accompany her to a party, is no reason why he should wish to prevent her enjoying the occasion in her own way. We presume there were plenty of other young ladies present willing to enter into conversation with the indignant E. M. B. Too much pairing off at a party is, of course, in bad taste, and shows a selfish disposition in those who practise it. The general enjoyment should never be long lost sight of by any person present at a social gathering. But if the young lady erred in this respect, it was the duty of her companion to set her a better example.

A. A. H.—The first balloon was sent up in France, June 5th, 1783, by two brothers, Stephen and Joseph Montgolfier, paper makers. It was simply a large linen bag, open at one end; and the ascending force was nothing more than air rarified by heat. A fire of chopped straw was kindled under the bag, the projectors thinking that the smoke would carry it up. On being let go, the balloon rushed up with a rapidity that astonished every beholder. In five minutes it had gone up a mile, and after remaining stationary for ten minutes, it rapidly descended at the distance of a mile and a half from the starting place. All Europe was interested in this experiment, which was soon repeated everywhere. Gas was soon substituted for heated air. The first men who ever went up in a balloon were Pilatre de Rosier and the Marquis d'Arlandes, who ascended November 21st, 1783. Their balloon was inflated by heated air, but they made a very successful ascension. Part of the expense of this grand experiment was borne by Dr. Franklin.

VERA.—The derivation of the word tobacco is variously given. Some say it is from Tobacco, a province of Yutuan, New Spain, others from the island of Tobago, one of the Caribbees, others from Tobacco in the Gulf of Florida. The botanical name is *Nicotiana tabacum*.

W. B. H.—Most of the celebrated Limburg cheese is made in the town of Horre, near the town of Limburg, once the capital of the old territory of the same name. The cheese is made by allowing the curds to undergo a certain amount of putrefactive fermentation before drying and pressing, and when this is done skilfully the offensive ammoniacal gases can be so completely got rid of as to leave a Limburger cheese as sweet as any other.

L. S. L.—So much depends upon the age, pursuits, habits, tastes, and character of the young gentleman that in the absence of any particulars concerning him it is a little difficult to say what he would like best. Try a purse or a pair of wool-work slippers, or, if he smokes, a cigar-case, with his initials worked on it in silk. For some books would be as good as anything. Exercise your own ingenuity a little, and think what he would prefer.

M. N. E.—To make violet ink, mix one drachm of the proper aniline colour with one and a half ounces of alcohol in a glass or enamelled iron vessel, let it stand for three hours; then add thirteen ounces of distilled water, and subject the whole to a gentle heat until the alcohol has evaporated, that is, until no odour of alcohol is perceptible; then add four drachms of gum arabic dissolved in three ounces of water. Mix and strain. As the aniline colours of commerce vary a great deal in quality, the amount of dilution must vary with the samples used, and the shade determined by trial.

E. T. S.—Vertigo, or dizziness of the head, is caused by irritation of the nerves of the stomach in dyspepsia, by long application of the mind, by a weakened nervous system, by hysteria, and by a fulness of the blood vessels of the head. When it proceeds from most of these causes it is not thought to be dangerous; but when caused by impending apoplexy, it is, of course, a symptom of very grave import. To get rid of it, if it proceeds from dyspepsia, eat lightly; if from constipation, take some gentle physic. Avoid coffee, tobacco, ardent spirits, and late suppers, and take as much exercise as possible.

A. S.—Buncombe is the name of a county in North Carolina, U.S. The word is said to have acquired the peculiar meaning to which you refer in the following manner: A member of Congress from Buncombe County was delivering a proxy speech in the House, which had the effect of nearly emptying it. A friend called his attention to the smallness of his audience, and suggested that he had better cut his speech short. "Oh," said he in reply, "I am speaking to Buncombe." Hence, all speeches which are designed not to influence the action of Congress, but to please the speaker's constituents, are now styled Buncombe speeches, or simply Buncombe, and in this country the meaning has been extended to speeches the speaker really does not believe in, but which are really "humbug."

L. D. R.—1. Investigation has failed to throw light upon the subject of your query. 2. Murrhine vases were a species of ware often mentioned by writers of the Roman Empire, the material of which has been much disputed by modern antiquaries. They came from the East, and, according to Pliny, were made of some precious stone found chiefly in Persia; but some have conjectured that this was an erroneous opinion prevalent among the Romans, and that they were in reality of porcelain, of which the manufacture was unknown to the western nations, while others have contended that they were made of variegated or onyx stone. They have also been referred to as having the reputed quality of breaking if poison was mixed with the liquor they contained. 3. Adobe is pronounced a-do-ba.

A. D. C.—The trouble is a family affair, which it would be best to try to smooth over as quietly as possible. The wife is apparently social in her tastes, and the husband should as far as possible, indulge her desire for innocent social gaieties. She, on the other hand, should remember that her husband does not enjoy dancing, and that he, being half the time from their home, naturally desires as much as possible her companionship during his unoccupied time. The fact that he does so desire her company, should be gratifying to her, and she should make the most of it. She should also remember that it is very "bad form" for married women to dance with men who are objectionable to their husbands. Such a wife as you describe needs very discreet, affectionate and firm management on the part of her husband to prevent her from ultimately bringing disgrace upon herself, and misery upon her family.

THE LONDON READER. Post-free. Three-halfpence Weekly; or Quarterly One Shilling and Nightpence.

ALL BACK NUMBERS, PARTS AND VOLUMES are in print, and may be had of all booksellers.

NOTICE.—Part 319, Now Ready, price Sixpence, post free, Eightpence. Also Vol. LI., bound in cloth, 4s. 6d.

ALL LETTERS TO BE ADDRESSED TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON READER, 334, Strand, W.C.

!; We cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts.

London: Published for the Proprietor, at 334, Strand, by J. B. SKEEL; and Printed by WOODFALL and KINDER, 70 to 76, Long Acre, W.C.